

**CONTEMPLATIONS  
ON THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT,**

**BY THE  
Right Rev. JOSEPH HALL, D. D.  
And Bishop of Norwich.**

**TOGETHER  
With his LIFE and HARD MEASURE,  
Written by HIMSELF.**

**The Whole carefully revised, the obsolete Words  
and Expressions explained, and the TEXTS of  
sacred Scripture added.**

**BY  
WILLIAM DODD, LL. D.**

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*Meditate on these Things. 1 Tim. iv. 15.*

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**IN TWO VOLUMES.**

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CONSTITUTIONS

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT

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Right Rev. Joseph Hall, D.D.

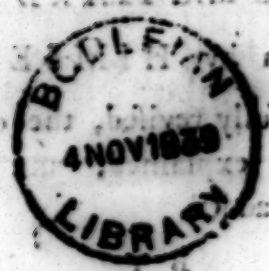
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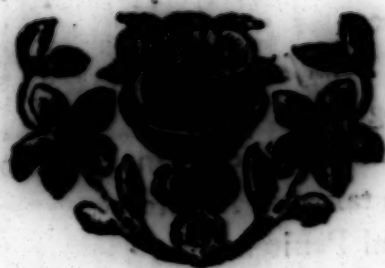
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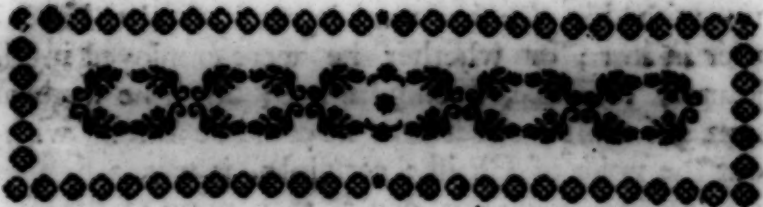
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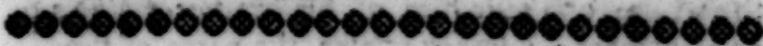
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## CONTEMPLATIONS.



### XIX. JOHN BAPTIST *bebeaded.*

Matt. xiv. 3,—12.

**T**HREE of the Evangelists have (with one pen) recorded the death of the great harbinger of Christ, as most remarkable and useful: He was the fore-runner of Christ, as into the world, so out of it: yea, he that made way for Christ into the world, made way for the name of Christ into the court of *Herod*; this *Herod Antipas*, was son to that *Herod*, who was, and is, ever infamous for the massacre at *Beth-lem*; cruelty runs in a blood; the murderer of *John* the fore-runner of Christ, is well descended of him, who would have murdered Christ, and, for his sake, murdered the infants. It was late before this *Herod* heard the fame of Jesus; not till he had taken off the head of *John Baptist*; the father of this *Herod* enquired for Christ too soon, this, too late. Great men should have the best intelligence; if they improve it to all other uses of either frivolous or civil affairs, with neglect of spiritual, their judgment

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ment shall be so much more, as their helps and means were greater: whether this *Herod* were taken up with his *Arabian* wars against *Arethas* his father in law; or whether he were employed in his journey to *Rome*, I enquire not; but if he were at home, I must wonder how he could be so long without the noise of Christ: certainly, it was a sign he had a very irreligious court, that none of his followers did so much as report to him the miracles of our Saviour; who doubtless told him many a vain tale the while; one tells him of his brother *Philip's* discontentment; another relates the news of the *Roman* court; another, the angry threats of *Arethas*; another flatters him with the admiration of his new mistress, and disparagement of the old; no man so much as says, Sir, there is a prophet in your kingdom, that doth wonders; there was not a man in his country, that had not been astonished with the fame of Jesus; yea, all *Syria*, and the adjoining regions rung of it; only *Herod's* court hears nothing; miserable is that greatness, which keeps men from the notice of Christ. How plain is it from hence, that our Saviour kept aloof from the court? The austere and hermitical harbinger of Christ, it seems, preached there, oft, and was heard gladly; though at last, to his cost; whilst our Saviour, who was more sociable, came not there. He sent a message to that fox, whose den he would not approach: whether it were that he purposely forbore, lest he should give that tyrant occasion to revive, and pursue his father's suspicion; or, whether, for that he would not so much honour a place so infamously graceless, and disordered; or, whether, by his example to teach us the avoidance of outward pomp and glory; surely *Herod* saw him not till his death, heard not of him till the death of *John Baptist*; And now, his unintelligence was not more

strange



strange than his misconstruction; *This is John Baptist, whom I beheaded*; First, he doubted, then, he resolved; he doubted upon others suggestions; upon his own apprehensions, he resolved thus: and though he thought good to set a face on it to strangers, unto whom it was not safe to bewray his fear; yet to his domestics, he freely discovered his thoughts, this is *John Baptist*; the troubled conscience will, many a time, open that to familiars, which it hides from the eyes of others. Shame and fear meet together in guiltiness. How could he imagine this to be *John*? That common conceit of transmigration could have no place here, there could be no transmigration of souls into a grown and well statured body; that received fancy of the *Jews* held only in the case of conception, and birth; not of full age: what need we scan this point, when *Herod* himself professes, *He is risen from the dead*? He that was a *Jew* by profession, and knew the story of *Elisba's* bones, of the *Sareptan's* and *Shunamite's* son; and, in all likelihood had now heard of our Saviour's miraculous resuscitation of others, might think this power reflected upon himself: Even *Herod*, as bad as he was, believed a resurrection; lewdness of life and practice may stand with orthodoxy in some main points of religion; who can doubt of this, when the devils believe and tremble? Where shall those men appear, whose faces are Christian, but their heart, *Saducees*?

Oh the terrors and tortures of a guilty heart, *Herod's* Conscience told him he had offered an unjust and cruel violence to an innocent; and now he thinks that *John's* ghost haunts him; had it not been for this guilt of his bosom, why might he not as well have thought, that the same God, whose hand is not shortened, had conferred this power of miracles upon some other; now, it could be no body



but *John*, that doth these wonders, and how can it be (thinks he) but that this revived prophet, who doth these strange things, will be revenged on me for his head? He that could give himself life, can more easily take mine; how can I escape the hands of a now immortal and impassible avenger?

A wicked man needs no other tormentor (especially for the sins of blood) then his own heart. Revel, O *Herod*, and feast, and frolick; and please thyself with dances, and triumphs, and pastimes; thy sin shall be as some fury that shall invisibly follow thee, and scourge thy guilty heart with secret lashes, and upon all occasions shall begin thine hell within thee: He wanted not other sins, that yet cried, deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God.

What an honour was done to *John* in this misprision? † While that man lived, the world was apt to think that *John* was the Christ: Now, that *John* is dead, *Herod* thinks Christ to be *John*. God gives to his poor conscionable servants a kind of reverence and high respect, even from those men that malign them most; so as they cannot but venerate whom they hate: Contrarily no wit or power can shield a lewd man from contempt.

*John* did no miracle in his life, yet now *Herod* thinks he did miracles in his resurrection, as supposing that a new supernatural life brought with it a supernatural power: Who can but wonder at the stupid partiality of *Herod*, and these *Jews*? They can imagine, and yield *John* risen from the dead, that never did miracle and rose not; whereas Christ, who did infinite miracles, and arose from the dead, by his almighty power, is not yielded by them to have risen; their over-bountiful misconceit of the servant, is not so injurious, as their niggardly infidelity to the master: Both of them shall convince, and confound them before the face of God. But,

oh

oh yet more blockish *Herod*! Thy conscience affrights thee with *John's* resurrection, and flies in thy face, for the cruel murder of so great a saint, yet where is thy repentance for so foul a fact? who would not have expected, that thou shouldest hereupon have humbled thyself for thy sin, and have laboured to make thy peace with God, and him: The greater the fame and power was of him whom thou supposedst recovered from thy slaughter, the more should have been thy penitence. Impiety is wont to besot men, and turn them senseless of their own safety and welfare: One would have thought that our first grandfire *Adam*, when he found his heart to strike him for his disobedience, should have run to meet God upon his knees; and have sued for pardon of his offence; instead of that, he runs to hide his head among the bushes. The case is still ours; we inherit both his sin, and his senselessness: Besides the infinite displeasure of God, wickedness makes the heart incapable of grace, and impregnable of the means of conversion.

Even the very first act of *Herod's* cruelty was heinous; he was foul enough with other sins, *he added this above all, that he shut up John in Prison*: The violence offered to God's messengers is branded for notorious, the sanctity and austere carriage of the man, won him honour justly from the multitude, and aggravated the sin; but whatever his person had been, his mission was sacred (*He shall send his messenger*;) the wrong redounds to the God that sent him: It is the charge of God, *Touch not mine anointed, nor do my Prophets any harm*: The precept is perhaps one, for even Prophets were anointed; but at least, next to violation of Majesty, is the wrong to a Prophet. But what do I not hear the Evangelist say? *that Herod heard John gladly*? How is it then? Did *John* take the ear and heart of *Herod*, and doth

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*Herod* bind the hands and feet of *John*? Doth he wilfully imprison, whom he gladly heard? How inconstant is a carnal heart to good resolutions? How little trust is to be given to the good notions of unregenerate persons? We have known when even mad dogs have fauned upon their master, yet he hath been too wise to trust him but in chains: As a true friend loves always, so a gracious heart always affects good, neither can be altered with change of occurrences; but the carnal man, like an hollow parasite, or a fauning spaniel flatters only for his own turn; if that be once either served, or crossed, like a churlish cur he is ready to snatch us by the fingers. Is there a worldly minded man that lives in some known sin, yet makes much of the preacher, frequents the church, talks godly, looks demurely, carries fair; trust him not, he will prove, after his pious fits, like some resty horse, which goes on some paces readily and eagerly, but anon either stands still, or falls to flinging and plunging, and never leaves till he have cast his rider.

What then might be the cause of *John's* bonds, and *Herod's* displeasure? For *Herodias's* sake, his brother *Philip's* wife: That woman was the subject of *Herod's* lust, and the exciter of his revenge: This light housewife ran away with her husband's brother; and now doting upon her incestuous lover, and finding *John* to be a rub in the way of her licentious adultery, is impatient of his liberty, and will not rest till his restraint. Resolved sinners are mad upon their lewd courses; and run furiously upon their gainfayers; a bear robbed of her whelps is less impetuous: Indeed, those that have determined to love their sins more than their souls, whom can they care for? Though *Herod* was wicked enough, yet had it not been upon *Herodias's* instigation, he had never imprisoned *John*.

Importunity

Importunity of lewd solicitors may be of dangerous consequence, and many times draws greatness into those ways, which it either would not have thought of, or abhorred. In the remotion of the wicked is the establishment of the throne.

Yet still is this dame called the wife of *Philip*, she had utterly left his bed, and was solemnly coupled to *Herod*; but all the ritual ceremonies of her new nuptials, cannot make her other than *Philip's* wife: It is a sure rule, that which is originally faulty, can never be rectified: The ordination of marriage, is one for one; *they twain shall be one flesh*: There cannot be two heads to one body, nor two bodies to one head: *Herod* was her adulterer, he was not her husband; she was *Herod's* harlot, *Philip's* wife: Yet how doth *Herod* dote on her, that for her sake he loads *John* with irons? Whither will not the fury of inordinate lust transport a man? Certainly *John* was of late in *Herod's* favour: That rough hewn preacher was for a wilderness, not for a court; *Herod's* invitation drew him thither, his reverence and respects encouraged him there: Now the love of his lust hath carried him into an hate of God's messenger: That man can have no hold of himself, or care of others, who hath given the reins to his unruly concupiscence. He that hath once fixed his heart upon the face of an Harlot, and hath beslaved himself to a bewitching beauty, casts off at once all fear of God, respect to laws, shame of the world, regard of his estate, care of wife, children, friends, reputation, patrimony, body, soul: So violent is this beastly passion, where it takes: neither ever leaves till it have hurried him into the chambers of death.

*Herodias* herself had first plotted to kill the *Baptist*, her murderers were suborned, her ambushes laid; the success failed, and now she works with *Herod* for his durance.\* Oh marvelous hand of the Almighty!

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\* Imprisonment.



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ty ! *John* was a mean man for estate, solitary, guardless, unarmed, impotent ; *Herodias*, a Queen, so great, that she sway'd *Herod* himself, and not more great than subtle ; and not more great or subtle, than malicious ; yet *Herodias* laid to kill *John*, and could not : what an invisible and yet sure guard there is about the poor servants of God, that seem helpless and despicable in themselves : there is over them an hand of divine protection, which can be no more opposed, than seen : Malice is not so strong in the hand as in the heart ; the Devil is stronger than a world of men ; a legion of devils, stronger than fewer spirits ; yet a legion of devils cannot hurt one swine without a permission : what can bands of enemies, or gates of hell do against God's secret ones ? *It is better to trust in the Lord, than to trust in Princes.*

It is not more clear who was the author, than what was the motive of this imprisonment ; the free reproof of *Herod's* incest, *It is not lawful*, &c. Both the offenders were nettled with this bold reprehension : *Herod* knew the reputation that *John* carried ; his conscience could not but suggest the foulness of his own fact ; neither could he but see how odious it would seem to persecute a Prophet for so just a reproof ; for the colour therefore of so tyrannical an act, he brands *John* with sedition, these presumptuous taxations are a disgrace, and disparagement to authority : It is no news with wicked tyrants, to cloak their cruelty, with pretences of justice ; never was it other than the lot of God's faithful servant, to be loaded with unjust reproaches in the conscionable performance of their duties ; they should speed too well in the opinion of men if they might but appear in their true shape.

The fact of *Herod* was horrible and prodigious ; to rob his own brother of the partner of his bed ; to tear away part of his flesh, yea, his body from his head :



head : So as here was at once in one act, adultery, incest, violence. Adultery, that he took another's wife : Incest, that he took his brother's : Violence, that he thus took her, in spight of her husband : Justly therefore might *John* say, *It is not lawful for thee* : He balked not one of *Herod's* sins, but reprov'd him of all the evils that he had done, though more eminently of this ; as that which more filled the eye of the world. It was not the crown, or lawful scepter of *Herod* that could daunt the homely, but faithful messenger of God : as one that came in the spirit of *Elias*, he fears no faces, spares no wickedness : there must meet in God's ministers courage and impartiality. Impartiality, not to make difference of persons ; courage, not to make spare of the sins of the greatest. It is an hard condition that the necessity of our calling casts upon us, in some cases, to run upon the pikes of displeasure : Prophecies were no burdens if they did not expose us to these dangers : We must connive at no evil ; every sin unrepov'd becomes ours.

Hatred is the daughter of truth ; *Herod* is inwardly vexed with so peremptory a reprehension ; and now he seeks to kill the author ; and why did he not ? *He feared the people.* The time was when he feared *John*, no less than now he hates him : He once revered him as a just and holy man, whom now he heart-burns as an enemy ; neither was it any counterfeit respect ; sure the man was then in earnest : what shall we say then ? was it that his inconstant heart was now fetch'd off by *Herodias* ; and wrought to a disaffection ? or was it with *Herod* as with *Solomon's* sluggard, that at once would and would not ; his thoughts are distracted with a mixt voluntary contradiction of purposes : as an holy man, and honoured of the people, he would not kill *John* ; he would kill him as an enemy to his lust. The

worse part prevaieth; appetite overways reason and conscience; and now were it not for fear of the people *John* should be murdered; what a self-conflicting and prodigious creature is a wicked man, left over to his own thoughts; whiles, on the one side he is urged by his conscience; on the other, by his lustful desires and by the importunity of satan; there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked; and after all his inward broils he falls upon the worst, so as his yieldance is worse than his fight: when God sees fit, *Herod's* tyranny shall effect that which the wise providence of the Almighty hath decreed for his servant's glory; in the mean while, rubs shall be cast in his way, and this for one, *he feared the people*. What an absurd and sottish thing is hypocrisy, *Herod* fears the people, he fears not God: Tell me then, *Herod*, what could the people do, at the worst? Perhaps mutiny against thee, raise armies and tumults, disturb the government, it may be, shake it off.

What could God do? yea, what not? stir up all his creatures to plague thee, and when he hath done tumble thee down to hell, and there torment thee everlastingly; Oh fond *Herod*, that fearest where no fear was; and fearest not where there is nothing but terror!

How God fits lewd men with restraints, if they be so godless as to regard his creature above himself, he hath external bugs to affright them withal; if bashful, he hath shame; if covetous, losses; if proud, disgrace; and by this means the most wise providence keeps the world in order: we cannot better judge of our hearts, than by what we most fear.

No man is so great as to be utterly exempted from fear; the Jews feared *Herod*, *Herod* feared the Jews, the healthful fear sickness, the free; servitude, the people fear a tyrant's oppression and cruelty, the ty-  
rant

rant fears the people's mutiny and insurrection : if there have been some so great as to be above the reach of the power and machinations of inferiors, yet never any that have been free from their fears and suspicions. Happy is he that fears nothing but what he should, God.

Why did *Herod* fear the people? They held *John* for a prophet : and this opinion was both common and constant : even the Scribes and Pharisees durst not say, his baptism was from men ; it is the wisdom and goodness of God, ever to give his children favour, somewhere ; if *Jezebel* hate *Elias*, *Abab* shall, for the time, honour him ; and if *Herod* hate the *Baptist*, and would kill him, yet the people reverence him ; *Herod's* malice would make him away, the people's reputation keeps him alive. As wise Princes have been content to maintain a faction in their court or state, for their own purposes, so here did the God of Heaven contrive and order differences of judgment and affection betwixt *Herod* and his subjects for his own holy ends ; else, certainly, if all wicked men should conspire in evil, there could be no being upon earth ; as contrarily, if evil spirits did not accord, Hell could not stand. Oh the unjust and fond partiality of this people ; they all generally applaud *John* for a prophet, yet they receive not his message ; whose prophet was *John*, but of the highest ? what was his errand, but to be the way-maker unto Christ ? what was he but the voice of that eternal word of his Father ? what was the sound of that voice, but *behold the Lamb of God ; He that comes after me, is greater than I, whose shoelatchet I am not worthy to unloose* ; yet, they honour the servant and reject the Master ; they condemn that Prince whose embassador they reverence ; how could they but argue ; *John* is a prophet ; he speaks from God ; his words must be true ; he tells us this is the  
Lamb

Lamb of God, the Messias that should come to redeem the world; this must then needs be he, we will look for no other; yet this perverse people receives *John* and rejects Jesus. There is ever an absurdity in unbelief, whilst it separates those relations and respects, which can never in nature be dis-joined; thus it readily apprehends God, as merciful in pardoning, not as just in punishing; Christ as a Saviour not as a Judge, thus we ordinarily (in a contrariety to these Jews) profess to receive the Master, and condemn the servants; while he hath said that will make it good, *he that despiseth you, despiseth me.*

That which *Herod* in-policy durst not, in wine he dares do; and that which God had restrained till his own time, now in his own time he permits to be done; the day was, as one of the Evangelists styles it, convenient; if for the purpose of *Herodias*, I am sure for God's, who having determined to glorify himself by *John's* martyrdom; will cast it upon a time when it may be most notified; *Herod's* birth-day; all the peers of the country, perhaps of the neighbour nations are now assembled; *Herodias* could not have found out a time more fit to blazon her own shame and cruelty than in such a confluence, the wise providence of God many times pays us with our own choice, so as when we think to have brought about our own ends, to our best content, we bring about his purposes to our own confusion.

*Herod's* birth-day is kept, and so was *Pharaoh's*; both of them with blood: these personal stains cannot make the practice unlawful; where the man is good, the birth is memorable.

What blessing have we, if life be none? and if our life be a blessing, why should it not be celebrated? excess and disorder may blemish any solemnity, but that cleaves to the act, not to the institution.



*Herod's* birth-day was kept with a feast, and this feast was a supper; it was fit to be a night-work, this festivity was spent in works of darkness, not of the light; it was a child of darkness that was then born, not of the day.

*Those that are drunken are drunk in the night*; there is a kind of shame in sin, even where it is committed with the stiffest resolution, at least, there was wont to be; if now sin be grown impudent, and justice bashful, woe be to us.

That there might be perfect revels at *Herod's* birth-day, besides the feast, there is music and dancing, and that by *Salome*, the daughter of *Herodias*; a meet daughter for such a mother, bred according to the disposition of so immodest a parent. Dancing, in itself, as it is a set, regular, harmonious motion of the body, cannot be unlawful, more than walking or running; circumstances may make it sinful; the wanton gesticulations of a virgin in a wild assembly of gallants warmed with wine could be no other than wanton and unmaidenly; it is not so frequently seen that the child follows the good qualities of the parent, it is seldom seen that it follows not the evil; nature is the soil, good and ill qualities are the herbs and weeds; the soil bears the weeds naturally, the herbs not without culture; what with tradition, what with education, it were strange if we should miss any of our parents mis-dispositions.

*Herodias* and *Salome* have what they desired; the dance pleased *Herod* well; those indecent motions that would have displeased any modest eye (though what should a modest eye do at *Herod's* feast?) over-pleased *Herod*. Well did *Herodias* know how to fit the tooth of her paramour, and had therefore purposely so composed the carriage and gesture of her daughter as it might take best; although doubtless the same action could not have so pleased from another:



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ther : *Herod* saw in *Salome's* face and fashion, the image of her whom he doted on ; so did she look, so did she move : besides, that his lavish cups had predisposed him to wantonness ; and now he cannot but like well that, which so pleasingly suited his inordinate desire ; all humours love to be fed, especially the vicious, so much more as they are more eager and stirring, there cannot be a better glass wherein to discern the face of our hearts, than our pleasures ; such as they are, such are we, whether vain or holy.

What a strange transportation was this ? *Whatsoever thou shalt ask* : half a kingdom for a dance ? *Herod*, this pastime is over-paid for ; there is no proportion in this remuneration ; this is not bounty, it is prodigality ; neither doth this pass under a bare promise only, but under an oath, and that solemn, and (as it might be in wine) serious. How largely do sensual men both profer, and give, for a little momentary and vain contentment ? How many censure *Herod's* gross impotence, and yet second it with a worse, giving away their precious souls for a short pleasure of sin ? What is half a kingdom, yea, a whole world to a soul ? So much therefore is their madness greater, as their loss is more.

So large a boon was worthy of a deliberation : *Salome* consults with her mother upon so ample and ratified a promise. Yet so much good nature and filial respect was in this wanton damsel, that she would not carve herself, of her option ; but takes her mother with her. If *Herodias* were infamously leud, yet she was her parent, and must direct her choice. Children should have no will of their own ? as their flesh is their parents, so should their will be. They do justly unchild themselves, that in many elections dispose of themselves without the consent of those which gave them being : It is both unman-  
nerly

nerly and unnatural in the child to run before, without, against the will of the parent.

Oh that we could be so officious to our good and heavenly Father, as she was to an earthly and wicked mother ! not to ask, not to undertake ought without his allowance, without his directions ; that when the world shall offer us whatsoever our heart desires, we could run to the oracles of God for our resolution, not daring to accept what he doth not both license and warrant.

Oh the wonderful strength of malice, *Salome* was offered to no less than half the kingdom of *Herod*, yet chooses to ask the head of a poor preacher. Nothing is so sweet to a corrupt heart as revenge, especially when it may bring with it a full scope to a dear sin. All worldlings are of this diet ; they had rather sin freely for a while and die, than refrain and live happily, eternally.

What a suit was this ? *Give me here in a charger the head of John Baptist*. It is not enough for her to say, Let *John's* head be cut off, but *Give me it in a charger*. What a service was here to be brought into a feast, especially to a woman, a dead man's head swimming in blood ? How cruel is a wicked heart, that can take pleasure in those things which have most horror.

Oh the importunity of a galled conscience ! *Herodias* could never think herself safe till *John* was dead ; she could never think him dead till his head was off ; she could not think his head was off till she had it brought her in a platter. A guilty heart never thinks it hath made sure enough ; yea, even after the head was thus brought they thought him alive again ; guiltiness and security could never lodge together in one bosom.

*Herod* was sorry, and no doubt in earnest, in the midst of his cups and pleasure ; I should rather think

think his jollity counterfeited than his grief. It is true, *Herod* was a fox ; but that subtle beast dissembles not always ; when he runs away from the dogs, he means as he does. And if he was formerly willing to have killed *John*, yet he was unwillingly willing, and so far as he was unwilling to kill him as a prophet, as a just man, so far was he sorry that he must be killed. Had *Herod* been wise he had not been perplexed ; had he been so wise as to have engaged himself lawfully, and within due limits, he had not been so intangled, as to have needed sorrow ; the folly of sinners is guilty of their pain, and draws upon them a late and unprofitable repentance.

But here the act was not past, though the word was past ; it was his misconceived entanglement that caused his sorrow, which might have been remedied by flying off. A threefold cord tied him to the performance ; the conscience of his oath, the respect to his guests, a loathsomeness to discontent *Herodias* and her daughter. *Herod* had so much religion as to make scruple of an oath, not so much as to make scruple of a murder. No man casts off all justice and piety at once, but while he gives himself over to some sins he sticks at others. It is no thanks to leud men that they are not universally vicious. All God's several laws cannot be violated at once ; there are sins contrary to each other, there are sins disagreeing from the leudest dispositions. There are oppressors that hate drunkenness, there are unclean persons which abhor murder, there are drunkards which hate cruelty ; one sin is enough to damn the soul, one leak to sink the vessel.

But, Oh fond *Herod*, what needed this unjust scrupulousness ? Well and safely mightest thou have shifted the bond of thine oath, with a double evasion : One, that this generality of thy promise was  
only

only to be construed of lawful acts and motions ; that only can we do, which we can justly do ; unlawfulness is in the nature of impossibility : The other, that had this engagement been so meant, yet might it be as lawfully rescinded as it was unlawfully made. A sinful promise is ill made, worse performed. Thus thou mightest, thou shouldest have come off fair, where now, holding thyself by an irreligious religion, tied to thy foolish and wicked oath, thou only goest away with this mitigation, that thou art a scrupulous murderer

In the mean while, if an *Herod* made such conscience of keeping an unlawful oath, how shall he in the day of judgment condemn those Christians, which make no conscience of oaths lawful, just, necessary ? Wo is me, one sells an oath for a bribe, another lends an oath for favour, another casts it away for malice ; I fear to think it may be a question whether there be more oaths broken or kept. O God, I marvel not, if being implored as a witness, as an avenger of falsehood, thou hold him not guiltless that thus dares take thy name in vain.

Next to his oath is the respect to his honour. His guests heard his deep engagement, and now he cannot fall off with reputation ; it would argue levity and rashness, to say, and not to do, and what would the world say ? The misconceits of the points of honour have cost millions of souls : As many a one doth good only to be seen of men, so many a one doth evil only to satisfy the humour and opinion of others. It is a damnable plausibility so to regard the vain approbation or censure of the beholders, as in the mean time to neglect the allowance or judgment of God. But how ill guests were these ? How well worthy of an *Herod's* table ? Had they had but common civility, finding *Herod* ; *exp* *xed*, they had acquitted him by their dissua-  
sions,



sions, and have disclaimed the expectation of so bloody a performance ; but they rather (to gratify *Herodias*) make way for so slight and easy a condescension. Even godly princes have complained of the iniquity of their heels, how much more must they needs be ill attended, that give encouragements and examples of lewdness ?

Neither was it the least motive that he was loth to displease his mistress : The damsel had pleased him in her dance, he would not discontent her in breaking his word. He saw *Herodias* in *Salome* ; the suit he knew was the mother's, though in the daughter's lips ; both would be displeased in falling off ; both would be gratified in yielding. O vain and wicked *Herod*, he cares not to offend God, to offend his conscience, he cares to offend a wanton mistress. This is one means to fill hell, loathsomeness to displease.

A good heart will rather fall out with the world than with God, than with his conscience.

The misgrounded sorrow of worldly hearts doth not withhold them from their intended sins. It is enough to vex, not enough to restrain them. *Herod* was sorry, but he sends the executioner for *John's* head ; one act hath made *Herod* a tyrant and *John* a martyr : *Herod* a tyrant, in that, without all legal proceedings, without so much as false witnesses he takes off the head of a man, of a prophet. It was lust that carried *Herod* into murder ; the proceedings of sin are more hardly avoided than the entrance ; whoso gives himself leave to be wicked knows not where he shall stay.

*John* a martyr, in dying for bearing witness to the truth, truth in life, in judgment, in doctrine. It was the holy purpose of God, that he which had baptised with water should now be baptized with blood. Never did God mean that his best children should dwell



dwell always upon earth ; should they stay here, wherefore hath he provided glory above ? Now would God have *John* delivered from a double prison, of his own, of *Herod's*, and placed in the glorious liberty of his sons. His head shall be taken off, that it may be crowned with glory. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.*

O happy birth-day (not of *Herod*, but) of the *Baptist*, now *John* enters into his joy, and in this name is the day ever celebrated of the church. This blessed fore-runner of Christ, said of himself, *I must decrease.* He is decreased indeed, and now grown shorter by the head ; but he is not so much decreased indeed in stature as increased in glory ; for one minute's pain he is possessed of endless joy ; and as he came before his Saviour into the world, so he is gone before him into heaven.

The head is brought in a charger : what a dish was here for a feast ? How prodigiously insatiable is the cruelty of a wicked heart. O blessed service, fit for the table of Heaven ! It is not for thee, O wicked *Herod*, nor for thee, malicious and wanton *Herodias* ; it is a dish precious and pleasing to the God of Heaven, to the blessed angels, who looked upon that head with more delight in his constant fidelity than the beholders saw it with horror, and *Herodias* with contentment of revenge.

It is brought to *Salome* as the reward of her dance, she presents it to her mother as the dainty she had longed for. Methinks I see how that chaste and holy countenance was tossed by impure and filthy hands, that true and faithful tongue, those sacred lips, those pure eyes, those mortified cheeks are now insultingly handled by an incestuous harlot, and made a scorn to the drunken eyes of *Herod's* guests.

Oh the wondrous judgments, and incomprehensible dispositions of the holy, wise, almighty God !

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ing him : when he withdraws himself, it is that he may be more earnestly inquired for. Now then he comes to find them whom he made shew to decline ; and seeing a great multitude, he passes from the ship to the shore : that which brought him from heaven to earth, brought him also from the sea to land ; his compassion on their souls, that he might teach them ; compassion on their bodies, that he might heal and feed them.

*Judea* was not large, but populous ; it could not be but there must be amongst so many men many diseased ; it is no marvel † if the report of so miraculous and universal sanations drew customers. They found three advantages of cure above the power and performance of any earthly Physician, certainty, bounty, ease. Certainty, in that all comers were cured without fail : bounty, in that they were cured without charge : ease, in that they were cured without pain. Far be from us, O Saviour, to think that thy glory hath abated of thy mercy ; still and ever thou art our assured, bountiful, and perfect physician, who healest all our diseases, and takest away all our infirmities. Oh that we could have our faithful recourse to thee in all our spiritual maladies, it were as impossible we should want help, as that thou shouldest want power and mercy.

That our Saviour might approve himself every way beneficent ; he that had filled the souls of his auditors with spiritual repast, will now fill their bodies with temporal ; and he that had approved himself the universal physician of his church, will now be known to be the great householder of the world, by whose liberal provision mankind is maintained ; he did not more miraculously heal than he feeds miraculously.

The disciples having well noted the diligent and importune attendance of the multitude, now towards

wards evening come to their master in a care of their repast and discharge. *This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.* How well it becomes even spiritual guides to regard the bodily necessities of God's people. This is not directly in our charge, neither may we leave our sacred ministration to serve tables. But yet, as the bodily father must take care for the soul of his child, so must the spiritual have respect to the body. This is all that the world commonly looks after, measuring their pastors more by their dishes than by their doctrine or conversation, as if they had the charge of their bellies, not of their souls: if they have open cellars, it matters not whether their mouths be open: if they be sociable in their carriage, favourable and indulgent to their recreations, full in their chear, how easily doth the world dispense with either their negligence, or enormities, as if the souls of these men lay in their waistband, in their gut: but surely they have reason to expect from their teachers a due proportion of hospitality; an unmeet parsimony is here not more odious than sinful; and where ability wants, yet care may not be wanting. Those preachers which are so intent upon their spiritual work, that in the mean time they over-strain the weaknesses of their people, holding them in their devotions longer than human frailty will permit, forget not themselves more than their pattern, and must be sent to school to these compassionate disciples, who, when evening was come, sue to Christ for the people's dismissal.

The place was desert; the time, evening; doubtless our Saviour made choice of both these, that there might be both more use, and more note of his miracle. Had it been in the morning their stomach

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had not been up, their feeding had been unnecessary. Had it been in the village provision either might have been made, or at least would have seemed made by themselves; but now that it was both desert and evening, there was good ground for the disciples to move, and for Christ to work their sustentation.\* Then only may we expect and crave help from God, when we find our need; superfluous aid can neither be heartily desired, nor earnestly looked for, nor thankfully received from the hands of mercy. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. If it be not a burden it is no casting it upon God. Hence it is that divine aid comes ever in the very upshot and exigence of our trials, when we have been exercised, and almost tired with long hopes, yea with despairs of success, that it may be both more longed for ere it come, and when it comes more welcome.

Oh the faith and zeal of these clients of Christ, they not only follow him from the city into the desert, from delicacy to want, from frequency to solitude; but forget their bodies in pursuit of the food of their souls.

Nothing is more hard for an healthful man to forget than his belly; within few hours this will be sure to solicit him, and will take no denials; yet such sweetness did these hearers find in this spiritual repast, that they thought not on the bodily; the disciples pitied them, they had no mercy on themselves. By how much more a man's mind is taken up with heavenly things, so much less shall he care for earthly. What shall earth be to us when we are all spirit? And in the mean time, according to the degrees of our intellectual elevations, shall be our neglect of bodily contentments.

The disciples think they move well: *Send them away that they may buy victuals.* Here was a strong charity,

city, but a weak faith; a strong charity, in that they would have the people relieved; a weak faith, in that they supposed they could not otherways be so well relieved. As a man, who when he sees many ways lie before him, takes that which he thinks both fairest and nearest, so do they. This way of relief lay openest to their view, and promised most. Well might they have thought, it is as easy for our master to feed them as to heal them; there is an equal facility in all things to a supernatural power; yet they say, *Send them away*. In all our projects and suits we are still ready to move for that which is most obvious, most likely, when sometimes that is less agreeable to the will of God.

The all-wise and almighty arbiter of all things hath a thousand secret means to honour himself in his proceedings with us; it is not for us to carve boldly for ourselves; but we must humbly depend on the disposal of his wisdom and mercy.

Our Saviour's answer gives a strange check to their motion, *they need not depart*. Not need? They had no victuals, they must have, there was none to be had; what more need could be? He knew the supply which he intended, though they knew it not. His command was therefore more strange, than his assertion, *give ye them to eat*. Nothing gives what it hath not; had they had victuals, they had not called for a dismissal, and not having, how should they give? It was thy wisdom, O Saviour, thus to prepare thy disciples for the intended miracle; thou wouldst not do it abruptly, without an intimation both of the purpose of it, and the necessity. And how modestly dost thou undertake it; without noise, without ostentation? I hear thee not say, I will give them to eat, but, *give ye*, as if it should be their act, not thine: thus, sometimes it pleaseth thee to require of us what we are not able to perform; either

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either that thou may'st shew us what we cannot do, and so humble us, or that thou may'st erect us to a dependance upon thee, who canst do it for us : As when the mother bids the infant come to her, which hath not yet the steady use of his legs, it is that he may cling the faster to her hand or coat for supportation.

Thou bidst us, impotent wretches, to keep thy royal law : Alas, what can we sinners do ? there is not one letter of those thy ten words, that we are able to keep : this charge of thine intends to shew us, not our strength, but our weakness : thus thou wouldst turn our eyes both back, to what we might have done, to what we could have done ; and upwards to thee in whom we have done it ; in whom we can do it ; he wrongs thy goodness and justice, that mis-construes these thy commands, as if they were of the same nature, with those of the Egyptian task-masters ; requiring the brick, and not giving the straw ; but, in bidding us do what we cannot, thou inablest us to do what thou biddest ; thy precepts under the Gospel have not only an intimation of our duty, but an habilitation of thy power ; as here, when thou badeest the disciples to give to the multitude, thou meantest to supply unto them what thou commandest to give.

Our Saviour hath what he would ; an acknowledgement of their insufficiency ; *We have here but five loaves and two fishes.* A poor provision for the family of the Lord of the whole earth : five loaves, and those barley ; two fishes, and those little ones : we well know, O Saviour, that the beasts were thine on a thousand mountains ; all the corn thine, that covered the whole surface of the earth ; all the fowls of the air thine ; it was thou that providest those drifts of quails, that fell among the tents of thy rebellious Israelites ; that rainedst down

those showers of Manna round about their camp ; and dost thou take up (for thyself, and thy many) with *five barley loaves, and two little fishes* ? Certainly, this was thy will, not thy need. To teach us, that this body must be fed, not pampered. Our belly may not be our master, much less our God ; or if it be, the next word is, whose glory is their shame ; whose end damnation : it is noted as the crime of the rich glutton, that he sated deliciously every day : I never find that Christ entertained any guest, but twice ; and that was only with loaves and fishes ; I find him sometimes feasted by others, more liberally. But this domestical fare how simple, how homely it is ? The end of food is to sustain nature ; meat was ordained for the belly, the belly for the body ; the body for the soul, the soul for God ; we must still look through the subordinate ends to the highest : to rest in the pleasure of the meat, is for those creatures which have no souls : O the extreme delicacy of these times ! What conquisition is here of all sorts of curious dishes from the furthest seas, and lands, to make up one hour's meal ? what broken cookery ? what devised mixtures ? what nice sauces ; what feasting not of the taste only, but of the sent ? Are we the disciples of him that took up with the loaves and fishes, or the scholars of a *Philoxenus*, or an *Apicius*, or *Vitellius*, or those other monsters of the palate ? the true sons of those first parents that killed themselves with their teeth ?

Neither was the quality of these victuals more coarse, than the quantity small : they make a *But*, of five loaves, and two fishes ; and well might, in respect of so many thousand mouths ; a little food to an hungry stomach, doth rather stir up appetite, than satisfy it ; as a little rain upon a drougthy  
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foil, doth rather help to scorch, than refresh it. When we look with the eye of sense, or reason upon any object, we shall see an impossibility of those effects, which faith can easily apprehend, and divine power more easily produce. Carnal minds are ready to measure all our hopes by human possibilities; and when they fail, to despair of success: where true faith measures them by divine power, and therefore can never be disheartned; this grace is for things not seen, and whether beyond hope, or against it.

The virtue is not in the means, but in the agent, *Bring them hither to me*: how much more easy had it been for our Saviour, to fetch the loaves to him, than to multiply them? The hands of the disciples shall bring them, that they might more fully witness both the author, and manner of the instant miracle. Had the loaves and fishes been multiplied, without this bringing, perhaps they might have seemed to have come by the secret provision of the guests; now there can be no question either of the act, or of the agent. As God takes pleasure in doing wonders for men, so he loves to be acknowledged in the great works that he doth; he hath no reason to part with his own glory; that is too precious for him to lose, or for his creature to embezel. And how justly didst thou O Saviour, in this, mean to teach thy disciples, that it was thou only, who feedest the world: and upon whom both themselves and all their fellow-creatures must depend for their nourishment and provision; and that if it came not through thy hands, it could not come to theirs.

There need no more words; I do not hear the disciples stand upon the terms of their own necessity; alas, Sir, it is too little for ourselves; whence shall we then relieve our own hunger? give leave

to our charity to begin at home : but they willingly yield to the command of their master ; and put themselves upon his providence, for the sequel. When we have a charge from God, it is not for us to stand upon self-respects, in this case, there is no such sure liberty as in a self-contempt ; O God, when thou callest to us for our five loaves, we must forget our own interest, otherwise, if we be more thrifty than obedient, our good turns evil ; and much better had it been for us to have wanted that, which we with-hold from the owner.

He that is the master of the feast marshals the guests ; *he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass* ; they obey, and expect ; O marvelous faith ! So many thousands sit down, and address themselves to a meal, when they saw nothing but five poor barley loaves ; and two small fishes. None of them say ; sit down ? to what ? Here are the mouths, but where is the meat ? We can soon be set, but whence shall we be served ? ere we draw our knives, let us see our cheer ; but they meekly and obediently dispose themselves to their places, and look up to Christ, for a miraculous purveyance. It is for all that would be Christ's followers ; to lead the life of faith ; and, even where means appear not, to wait upon that merciful hand. Nothing is more easy than to trust God, when our barns and coffers are full ; and to say, give us our daily bread, when we have it in our cupboard ; but when we have nothing, when we know not how, or whence to get any thing, then to depend upon an invisible bounty, this is a true and noble act of faith ; to cast away our own that we may immediately live upon divine providence, I know no warrant. But, when the necessity is of God's making, we see our refuge and happy are we if our confidence can fly to it, and rest in it. Yea full-

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ness should be a curse, if it should debar us from this dependance; at our best, we must look up to this great householder of the world; and cannot but need his provision: if we have meat, perhaps not appetite; if appetite, it may be, not digestion; or if that, not health, and freedom from pain; or if that, (perhaps, from other occurents) not life.

The guests are set, full of expectation; he that could have multiplied the bread, in absence, in silence, takes it, and blesses it; that he might at once shew them the author, and the means of this increase. It is thy blessing, O God, that maketh rich; what a difference do we see in mens estates; Some languish under great means, and enjoy not either their substance, or themselves; others are chearful, and happy in a little; second causes may not be denied their work; but the over-ruling power is above; the subordinateness of the creature doth not take away from the right, from the thank of the first mover.

He could as well have multiplied the loaves whole; why would he rather do it in the breaking? Was it to teach us that in the distribution of our goods, we should expect his blessing, not in their intireness, and reservation? *There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth*, saith Solomon: yea, there is no man but increaseth by scattering; it is the grain thrown into the several furrows of the earth, which yields the rich interest unto the husbandman; that which is tied up in his sack, or heaped in his granary decreaseth by keeping: he that soweth liberally shall reap liberally.

Away with our weak distrust; if wealth came by us, giving were the way to want: now, that God gives to the giver, nothing can so sure enrich us as our beneficence. He multiplied the bread not to

keep, but to give ; he gave it to the disciples : and why not rather by his own hand to the multitude, that so the miracle and thank might have been more immediate ? Wherefore was this, O Saviour, but that thou mightest win respects to thy disciples, from the people ; as great princes, when they would ingratiate a favorite, pass no suits, but through his hands ; what an honour was this to thy servants, that as thou wert mediator betwixt thy father and man, so thou wouldst have them, in some beneficial occasion, mediate betwixt men and thee : how fit a type is this of thy spiritual provision, that thou who couldst have fed the world by thine immediate word, wouldst by the hands of thy ministers divide the bread of life to all hearers. Like as it was with the law, well did the Israelites see and hear that thou couldst deliver that dreadful message with thine own mouth, yet in favour of their weakness that thou wouldst treat with them, by a *Moses* ; use of means derogates nothing from the efficacy of the principal agent, yea adds to it ; it is a strange weakness of our spiritual eyes, if we can look but to the next hand : how absurd had these guests been, if they had terminated the thanks in the servitors ; and had said, we have it from you, whence ye had it, is no part of our care ; we owe this favour to you ; if you owe it to your master, acknowledge your obligations to him, as we do unto you ; but, since they well knew that the disciples might have handled this bread long enough, ere any such effect could have followed, they easily find to whom they are beholden ; our christian wisdom must teach us, whosoever be the means, to reserve our many thanks for the author of our good.

He gave the bread then to his disciples, not to eat, not to keep, but to distribute. It was not their particular

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particular benefit he regarded in this gift, but the good of many.

In every feast, each servitor takes up his dish, not to carry it aside into a corner for his own private repast, but to set it before the guests, for the honour of his master: when they have done, his cheer begins: what shall we say to those injurious waiters who fatten themselves with those concealed messes, which are meant to others; their table is made their snare, and these stoln morsels cannot but end in bitterness.

Accordingly the disciples set this fare before the guests; I do not see so much as *Judas* reserve a share to himself, whether out of hunger or distrust. Had not our Saviour commanded so free a distribution, their self-love would easily have taught them where to begin. Nature says, first thyself, then thy friends: either extremity, or particular charge gives grace occasion to alter the case. Far be it from us to think we have any claim in that which the owner gives us merely to bestow.

I know not now whether more to wonder at the miraculous eating, or the miraculous leaving. Here were a whole host of guests, five thousand men; and in all likelihood no fewer women and children; perhaps some of these only looked on; nay, they did all eat; perhaps every man a crumb or a bit; nay, they did eat to satiety; all were satisfied; so many must needs make clean work; of so little there could be left nothing; yea, there were fragments remaining; perhaps some crumbs or crusts, hardly to be discerned, much less gathered; nay, twelve baskets full; more remained than was first set down; had they eaten nothing it was a just miracle that so much should be left; had nothing remained, it was no less miracle that so many had eaten, and so many satisfied; but now that so many bellies and so many baskets

were filled; the miracle was doubled. O work of a boundless omnipotency. Whether this were done by creation, or by conversion, uses to be questioned, but needs not; whilst Christ multiplies the bread, it is not for us to multiply his miracles; to make ought of nothing, is more than to add much unto something; it was therefore rather by turning of a former matter into these substances, than by making these substances of nothing.

Howsoever, here is a marvellous provision made, a marvellous bounty of that provision, a no less marvellous extent of that bounty.

Those that depend upon God, and busy themselves in his work shall not want a due purveyance in the very desert: our strait and confined beneficence reaches so far, as to provide for our own: those of our domestics which labour in our service, do but justly expect and challenge their diet; whereas day-labourers are oft-times at their own finding; how much more will that God, who is infinite in mercy and power, take order for the livelihood of those that attend him? We see the birds of the air provided for by him; how rarely have we found any of them dead of hunger? yet, what do they, but what they are carried unto by natural instinct? how much more where, besides propriety, there is a rational and willing service; shall the *Israelites* be fed with manna, *Elijah* by the ravens, the widow by her multiplied meal and oil; Christ's clients in the wilderness with loaves and fishes. O God, whilst thou dost thus promerit us by thy providence, let not us wrong thee by distrust.

God's undertakings cannot but be exquisite; those whom he professes to feed must needs have enough: the measure of his bounty cannot but run over; doth he take upon him to prepare a table for his *Israel* in the desert; the bread shall be the food  
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of angels, the flesh shall be the delicacies of princes; manna and quails: doth he take upon him to make wine for the marriage-feast of *Cana*, there shall be both store and choice; the vintage yields poor stuff to this; will he feast his auditors in the wilderness; if they have not dainties, they shall have plenty; *They were all satisfied*: Neither yet, O Saviour, is thy hand closed; what abundance of heavenly doctrine dost thou set before us? how are we feasted, yea pampered with thy celestial delicacies: not according to our meanness, but according to thy state are we fed: thrifty and niggardly collations are not for Princes; we are full of thy goodness, O let our hearts run over with thanks.

I do gladly wonder at this miracle of thine, O Saviour, yet so as that I forget not mine own condition. Whence is it that we have our continual provision? one and the same munificent hand doth all; if the *Israelites* were fed with manna in the desert, and with corn in *Canaan*; both were done by the same power and bounty; if the disciples were fed by the loaves multiplied, and we by the grain multiplied, both are the act of one omnipotence; what is this but a perpetual miracle, O God, which thou workest for our preservation? without thee, there is no more power in the grain to multiply, than in the loaf; it is thou that givest it a body at thy pleasure, even to every seed his own body; it is thou that givest fulness of bread and cleanness of teeth: It is no reason thy goodness should be less magnified because it is universal.

One or two baskets could have held the five loaves and two fishes; not less than twelve can hold the remainders. The divine munificence provides not for our necessity only, but for our abundance, yea, superfluity: Envy and ignorance whilst they make God the author of enough, are ready to impute the

surplusage to another cause; as we commonly say of wine, that the liquor is God's, the excess, Satan's.

Thy table, O Saviour, convinces them, which had more taken away, than set on: thy blessing makes an estate not competent only, but rich. I hear of barns full of plenty, and presses bursting out with new wine, as the rewards of those that honour thee with their substance. I hear of heads anointed with oil, and cups running over. O God, as thou hast a free hand to give, so let us have a free heart to return thee the praise of thy bounty.

Those fragments were left behind; I do not see the people, when they had filled their bellies, cramming their pockets or stuffing their wallets; yet the place was desert, and some of them, doubtless, had far home.

It becomes true disciples to be content with the present, not too solicitous for the future; O Saviour, that didst not bid us beg bread for to-morrow, but for to day; not, that we should refuse thy bounty when thou pleasest to give; but that we should not distrust thy providence, for the need we may have.

Even these fragments (though but of barley-loaves and fish-bones) may not be left in the desert, for the compost of that earth whereon they were increased, but by our Saviour's holy and just command are gathered up. The liberal housekeeper of the world will not allow the loss of his oughts: the childrens bread may not be given to dogs: and if the crumbs fall to their share, it is because their smallness admits not of a collection: if those who out of obedience or due thrift have thought to gather up crumbs, have found them pearls, I wonder not: surely both are alike, the good creatures of the same maker; and both of them may prove equally costly to us in their wilful mispence. But oh, what shall we say, that not crusts and crumbs, not loaves, and dishes  
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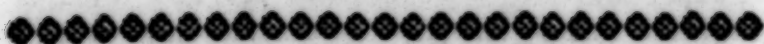


and cups; but whole patrimonies are idly lavished away; not merely lost (this were more easy) but ill spent in a wicked riot upon dice, drabs, drunkards. O the fearful account of these unthrifty Bailiffs, which shall once be given in to our great Lord and Master, when he shall call us to a strict reckoning of all our talents; he was condemned that increased not the sum concredited to him; what shall become of him that lawlessly impairs it?

Who gathered up these fragments, but the twelve apostles; every one his basket full. They were the servitors that set on this banquet at the command of Christ; they waited on the tables, they took away.

It was our Saviour's just care that those offals should not perish; but he well knew that a greater loss depended upon those scraps; a loss of glory to the omnipotent worker of that miracle; the feeding of the multitude was but the one half of the work, the other half was in the remnant. Of all other it most concerns the successors of the Apostles to take care that the marvellous works of their God and Saviour may be improved to the best; they may not suffer a crust or crumb to be lost that may yield any glory to that almighty agent.

Here was not any morsel or bone that was not worthy to be a relic; every the least parcel whereof was no other than miraculous: all the ancient monuments of God's supernatural power and mercy were in the keeping of *Aaron* and his sons: there is no servant in the family, but should be thriftily careful for his Master's profit, but most of all the steward, who is particularly charged with this oversight. Wo be to us, if we care only to gather up our own scraps with neglect of the precious morsels of our Maker and Redeemer.

XXI. *The Walk upon the Water.*

St. Matt. xiv. 22—33.

**A**L L elements are alike to their Maker; he that had well approved his power on the Land, will now shew it in the air or in the waters, he that had preserved the multitude from the peril of hunger in the desert, will now preserve his disciples from the peril of the tempest in the sea.

Where do we ever else find any compulsion offered by Christ to his disciples: he was like the good Centurion, he said to one, go, and he goeth: when he did but call them from their nets they came and when he sent them, by pairs, into the city and country of *Judæa*, to preach the gospel, they went; there was never errand, whereon they went unwillingly: only now he constrained them to depart: we may easily conceive how loth they were to leave him; whether out of love, or of common civility. *Peter's* tongue did but (when it was) speak the heart of the rest; *Master, thou knowest that I love thee*; who could chuse but be in love with such a Master? and who can willingly part from what he loves? but, had the respects been only common and ordinary, how unfit might it seem to leave a master, now towards night, in a wild place, amongst strangers; unprovided of the means of his passage: where otherwise therefore he needed but to bid, now he constrains. O Saviour, it was ever thy manner to call all men unto thee; *Come to me, all that labour, and are heavy laden*; when didst thou ever drive any one from thee? neither had it been so now, but to draw them closer unto thee, whom thou seemedst for

for the time to abdicate: in the mean while, I know not whether more to excuse their unwillingness, or to applaud their obedience. As it shall be fully above, so it was proportionally here below; in thy presence (O Saviour) is the fulness of joy: once when thou askedst these thy domestics, whether they also would depart; it was answered thee by one tongue for all; Master, whither should we go from thee, thou hast the words of eternal life? What a death was it then to them to be compelled to leave thee? sometimes it pleaseth the divine goodness to lay upon his servants such commands as favour of harshness and discomfort; which yet both in his intention, and in the event are no other than gracious and sovereign. The more difficulty was in the charge, the more praise was in the obedience; I do not hear them stand upon the terms of capitulation with their master, nor pleading importunately for their stay, but, instantly upon the command, they yield and go; we are never perfect disciples till we can depart from our reason, from our will; yea (O Saviour) when thou biddest us, from thyself.

Neither will the multitude be gone without a dismissal: they had followed him whilst they were hungry, they will leave him now they are fed; fain would they put that honour upon him, which to avoid, he is fain to avoid them; gladly would they pay a kingdom to him, as their shot, for their late banquet: he shuns both it and them, O Saviour, when the hour of thy passion was come, thou couldst offer thyself readily to thine apprehenders, and now when the glory of the world presses upon thee, thou runnest away from a crown; was it to teach us that there is less danger in suffering than in outward prosperity: what, do we dote upon that worldly honour, which thou heldest worthy of avoidance and contempt?

Besides this reservedness, it was devotion that drew Jesus aside; he went alone up to the mountain to pray; lo, thou, to whom the greatest throng was a solitude, in respect of the fruition of thy father; thou who wert incapable of distraction from him, with whom thou art one, wouldst yet so much act man, as to retire, for the opportunity of prayer; to teach us, who are nothing but wild thoughts and giddy distractedness, to go aside when we would speak with God; how happy is it for us that thou prayedst; O Saviour, thou prayedst for us, who have not grace enough to pray for ourselves, not worth enough to be accepted when we do pray: thy prayers, which were most perfect and impetrative, are they by which our weak and unworthy prayers receive both life and favour. And now, how assiduous should we be in our supplications, who are empty of grace, full of wants; when thou who wert a God of all power, prayedst for that, which thou couldst command: therefore do we pray, because thou prayedst: therefore do we expect to be graciously answered in our prayers, because thou didst pray for us here on earth, and now intercedest for us in heaven.

The evening was come: the disciples looked long for their master; and loth they were to have stirred without him; but his command is more than the strongest wind to fill their sails, and they are now gone: their expectation made not the evening seem so long, as our Saviour's devotion made it seem short to him: he is on the mount, they on the sea; yet whilst he was in the mount praying, and lifting up his eyes to his father, he fails not to cast them about upon his disciples, tossed on the waves: those all-seeing eyes admit of no limits. At once, he sees the highest heavens, and the midst of the sea; the glory of his father, and the misery of his disciples;



ciples; whatever prospects present themselves to his view, the distress of his followers is ever most noted.

How much more dost thou now, O Saviour, from the height of thy glorious advancement, behold us thy wretched servants tossed on the unquiet sea of this world, and beaten with the troublesome and threatening billows of affliction: thou foresawest their toil and danger ere thou dismissedst them, and purposely sendest them away that they might be tossed: thou that couldst prevent our sufferings by thy power, wilt permit them in thy wisdom, that thou mayst glorify thy mercy in our deliverance, and confirm our faith by the issue of our distresses.

How do all things now seem to conspire to the vexing of the poor disciples? the night was fullen and dark, their master was absent, the sea was boisterous, the winds were high, and contrary: had their master been with them, howsoever the elements had raged, they had been secure; had their master been away, yet if the sea had been quiet and the winds fair, the passage might have been endured: now, both season, and sea, and wind, and their master's desertion had agreed to render them perfectly miserable. Sometimes the providence of God hath thought good so to order it, that to his best servants there appeareth no glimpse of comfort, but so absolute vexation, as if heaven and earth had plotted their full affliction: yea, O Saviour, what a dead night, what a fearful tempest, what an astonishing dereliction was that, wherein thou thyself criedst out in the bitterness of thine anguished soul, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Yet in all these extremities of misery, our gracious God intends nothing but his greater glory and ours; the triumph of our faith, the crown of our victory.

All that longsome and tempestuous night must the disciples wear out in danger and horror, as given  
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over to the winds and waves; but in the fourth watch of the night, when they were wearied out with toils and fears, comes deliverance.

At their entrance into the ship, at the arising of the tempest, at the shutting in of the evening, there was no news of Christ; but when they have been all the night long beaten not so much with storms and waves, as with their own thoughts, now in the fourth watch, (which was near to the morning) Jesus came unto them, and purposely not till then. That he might exercise their patience; that he might inure them to wait upon divine providence in cases of extremity, that their devotions might be more whetted by delay; that they might give gladder welcome to their deliverance. O God, thus thou thinkest fit to do still; we are by turns in our sea, the winds bluster, the billows swell, the night, and thy absence heighten our discomfort; thy time and ours is set; as yet it is but midnight with us; can we but hold out patiently till the fourth watch, thou wilt surely come and rescue us. O let us not faint under our sorrows, but weary out our three watches of tribulation with undaunted patience and holy resolution.

O Saviour, our extremities are the seasons of thine aid: thou camest at last, but yet so as that there was more dread than joy in thy presence; thy coming was both miraculous and frightful.

Thou God of elements passedst through the air, walkedst upon the waters; whether thou meantest to terminate this miracle in thy body, or in the waves which thou trodest upon, whether so lighting the one, that it should make no impression in the liquid waters, or whether so consolidating the other, that the paved waves yielded a firm causeway to thy sacred feet to walk on, I neither determine nor enquire: thy silence ruleth mine; thy power was in either, miraculous; neither know I,  
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in whether to adore it more. But withal, give me leave to wonder more at thy passage than at thy coming: wherefore camest thou but to comfort them; and wherefore then wouldest thou pass by them, as if thou hadst intended nothing but their dismay: thine absence could not be so grievous, as thy præterition\*; that might seem justly occasioned, this could not but seem willingly neglective. Our last conflicts have wont ever to be the forest: as when after some dripping rain it pours down most vehemently, we think the weather is changing to serenity.

O Saviour, we may not always measure thy meaning by thy semblance; sometimes, what thou most intendedst, thou shewest least. In our afflictions thou turnest thy back upon us and hidest thy face from us, when thou most mindest our distresses: so *Jonathan* shot the arrows beyond *David*, when he meant them to him: So *Joseph* calls for *Benjamin* into bonds, when his heart was bound to him in the strongest affection: so the tender mother makes as if she would give away her crying child, whom she hugs so much closer in her bosom.

If thou pass by us whilst we are struggling with the tempest, we know it is not for want of mercy: thou canst not neglect us, oh, let not us distrust thee. What object should have been so pleasing to the eyes of the disciples as their master; and so much the more as he shewed his divine power in this miraculous walk? but lo, contrarily, *they are troubled*; not with his presence, but with this form of presence.

The supernatural works of God, when we look upon them with our own eyes, are subject to a dangerous misprision: the very sun-beams to whom we are beholden for our sight, if we eye them directly,

\* *Passing by.*

blind

blind us : miserable men, we are ready to suspect truths, to run away from our safety, to be afraid of our comforts, to misknow our best friends.

And why are they thus troubled? *They thought they had seen a spirit*: That there have been such apparitions of spirits, both good, and evil, hath ever been a truth undoubtedly received of Pagans, Jews, Christians; although in the blind times of superstition, there was much collusion mixed with some verities: crafty men and lying spirits agreed to abuse the credulous world; but even where there was not truth, yet there was horror; The very good angels were not seen without much fear; their sight was construed to bode death, how much more the evil, which in their very nature are harmful and pernicious. We see not a snake or a toad without some recoiling of blood and sensible reluctance, although those creatures run away from us: how much more must our hairs stand upright, and our senses boil at the sight of a spirit; whose both nature and will is contrary to ours, and professedly bent to our hurt.

But, say it had been what they mistook it for, a spirit; why should they fear? had they well considered they had soon found, that evil spirits are nevertheless present, when they are not seen; and nevertheless harmful or malicious, when they are present unseen. Visibleness adds nothing to their sight or mischief; and could their eyes have been opened, they had, with *Elisba's* servant, seen more with them than against them; a sure, though invisible guard of more powerful spirits, and themselves under the protection of the God of spirits, so as they might have bidden a bold defiance to all the powers of darkness. But, partly, their faith was yet but in the bud; and partly, the presentation of this dreadful object was sudden, and without the respite of a recollection and settlement of their thoughts. Oh



Oh the weakness of our frail nature, who in the want of faith are affrighted with the visible appearance of those adversaries, whom we profess daily to resist and vanquish, and with whom we know the decree of God hath matched us in an everlasting conflict. Are not these they that ejected devils by their command? Are not these of them that could say, master, the evil spirits are subdued to us; yet now, when they see but an imagined spirit, they fear. What power there is in the eye to betray the heart.

Whilst *Goliath* was mingled with the rest of the *Philistine* host, *Israel* camped boldly against them; but when that giant stalks out single between the two armies, and fills and amazes their eyes with his hideous stature, now they run away for fear: behold, we are committed with legions of evil spirits, and complain not; let but one of them give us some visible token of his presence, we shriek and tremble and are not ourselves.

Neither is our weakness more conspicuous than thy mercy, O God; in restraining these spiritual enemies from these dreadful and ghastly representations of themselves to our eyes: might those infernal spirits have liberty to appear, how, and when, and to whom they would, certainly, not many would be left in their wits, or in their lives: it is thy power and goodness to frail mankind, that they are kept in their chains and reserved in the darkness of their own spiritual being, that we may both oppugn and subdue them unseen.

But O the deplorable condition of reprobate souls; if but the imagined sight of one of these spirits of darkness can so daunt the heart of those, which are free from their power, what a terror shall it be to live perpetually in the sight, yea, under the torture of thousands, of legions, of millions of devils?

vils? O the madness of wilful sinners, that will needs run themselves headily into so dreadful a damnation.

It was high time for our Saviour to speak; what with the tempest, what with the apparition, the disciples were almost lost with fear: how seasonable are his gracious redresses; till they were thus affrighted he would not speak: when they were thus affrighted he would not hold his peace: if his presence were fearful, yet his word was comfortable. *Be of good cheer, it is I*; yea, it is his word only which must make his presence both known and comfortable. He was present before, they mistook him, and feared; there needs no other erection of their drooping hearts, but, *It is I*. It is cordial enough to us, in the worst of our afflictions, to be assured of Christ's presence with us; say but *It is I*, O Saviour, and let evils do their worst; thou needest not say any more; thy voice was evidence enough; so well were the disciples acquainted with the tongue of thee their master, that, *It is I*, was as much as an hundred names. Thou art the good shepherd, we are not of thy flock, if we know thee not by thy voice, from a thousand. Even this one is a great word, yea, an ample stile, *It is I*: the same tongue that said to *Moses*, *I am hath sent thee*, saith now to the disciples, *It is I*; I your Lord and master, I the commander of winds and waters, I the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, I the God of spirits; let heaven be but as one scroll, and let it be written all over with titles, they cannot express more than, *It is I*; O sweet and seasonable word of a gracious Saviour able to calm all tempests, able to revive all hearts; say but so to my soul, and, in spite of hell, I am safe.

No sooner hath Jesus said, *I*, than *Peter* answers, *Master*: he can instantly name him that did not  
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name himself; every little hint is enough to faith; the church sees her beloved, as well through the lattice, as through the open window. Which of all the followers of Christ gave so pregnant testimonies upon all occasions, of his faith, of his love to his master, as *Peter*? the rest were silent, whilst he both owned his master, and craved access to him in that liquid way: yet what a sensible mixture is here of faith and distrust? it is faith that said, *Master*; it was distrust (as some have construed it) that said, *If it be thou*: it was faith that said, *Bid me come to thee*; (implying that his word could as well enable, as command) it was faith that durst step down upon that watery pavement; it was distrust, that upon the sight of a mighty wind, feared: it was faith, that he walked, it was distrust that he sunk; it was faith that said, *Lord, save me*. O the imperfect composition of the best saint upon earth; as far from pure faith, as from mere infidelity. If there be pure earth in the center, all upward is mixed with other elements; contrarily, pure grace is above in the glorified spirits; all below is mixed with infirmity, with corruption; our best is but as the air, which never was, never can be at once fully enlightened; neither is there in the same region one constant state of light; it shall once be noon with us, when we shall have nothing but bright beams of glory, now it is but the dawning, wherein it is hard to say whether there be more light than darkness; we are now fair as the moon, which hath some spots in her greatest beauty; we shall be pure as the sun, whose face is all bright and glorious: ever since the time that *Adam* set his tooth in the apple, till our mouth be full of mould, it never was, it never can be other with us: far be it from us to settle willingly upon the dregs of our infidelity; far be it from us to be disheartened with  
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the sense of our defects and imperfections; *we believe, Lord, help our unbelief.*

Whilst I find some disputing the lawfulness of *Peter's* suit; others quarrelling at his, *If it be thou*; let me be taken up with the wonder at the faith, the fervour, the heroical valour of this prime apostle, that durst say; *Bid me come to thee upon the waters*: he might have suspected that the voice of his master might have been as easily imitated by that imagined spirit, as his person; he might have feared the blustering tempest, the threatening billows, the yeilding nature of that devouring element; but as despising all these thoughts of misdoubt, such is his desire to be near his master, that he says, *Bid me come to thee upon the waters*; he says not; *Come thou to me*. This had been Christ's act; and not his; neither doth he say, *Let me come to thee*: this had been his act, and not Christ's; neither doth he say, *Pray that I may come to thee*, as if this act had been out of the power of either; but *Bid me come to thee*; I know thou canst command both the waves and me; me, to be so light that I shall not bruise the moist surface of the waves: the waves to be so solid that they shall not yield to my weight; *All things obey thee; bid me come to thee upon the waters.*

It was a bold spirit that could wish it, more bold that could act it: no sooner hath our Saviour said *Come*, then he sets his foot upon the unquiet sea; not fearing either the softness, or the roughness of that uncouth passage; we are wont to wonder at the courage of that daring man; who first committed himself to the sea in a frail bark; though he had the strength of an oaken plank to secure him; how valiant must we needs grant him to be, that durst set his foot upon the bare sea and shift his paces? Well did *Peter* know that he who bad him, could uphold him; and therefore he both sues to be bidden,



den, and ventures to be upholden. True faith tasks itself with difficulties; neither can be dismayed with the conceits of ordinary impossibilities; it is not the scattering of straws, or casting of mole-hills, whereby the virtue of it is described, but removing of mountains. Like some courageous leader, it desires the honour of a danger; and sues for the first onset; whereas the worldly heart freezes in a lazy, or cowardly fear, and only casts for safety and ease.

*Peter* sues, *Jesus* bids: rather will he work miracles, then disappoint the suit of a faithful man. How easily might our Saviour have turned over this strange request of his bold disciple, and have said; what my omnipotence can do, is no rule for thy weakness; it is no less than presumption in a mere man, to hope to imitate the miraculous works of God and man; stay thou in the ship, and wonder; contenting thyself in this, that thou hast a master, to whom the land and water is alike; yet I hear not a check, but a call; *Come*: the suit of ambition is suddenly quashed in the mother of the *Zebedees*. The suits of revenge prove no better in the mouth of the two fiery disciples; but a suit of faith, though high, and seemingly unfit for us, he hath no power to deny: how much less, O Saviour, wilt thou stick at those things, which lie in the very road of our Christianity? Never man said, bid me to come to thee in the way of thy commandments, whom thou didst not both bid, and enable to come.

True faith rests not in great and good desires, but acts and executes accordingly; *Peter* doth not wish to go; and yet stand still; but his foot answers his tongue; and instantly chops down upon the waters. To sit still and wish, is for sluggish and cowardly spirits.



Formal volitions, yea velleities of good, whilst we will not so much as step out of the ship of our nature, to walk unto Christ, are but the faint motions of vain hypocrisy. It will be long enough ere the gale of good wishes can carry us to our Haven; ease slayeth the foolish. O Saviour, we have thy command to come to thee out of the ship of our natural corruption; let no sea affray us, let no tempest of temptation withhold us: no way can be but safe, when thou art the end.

Lo, *Peter* is walking upon the waves; two hands uphold him; the hand of Christ's power, the hand of his own faith; neither of them would do it alone; the hand of Christ's power laid hold on him; the hand of his faith laid hold on the power of Christ commanding; had not Christ's hand been powerful, that faith had been in vain; had not that faith of his strongly fixed upon Christ, that power had not been effectual to his preservation; whilst we are here in the world, we walk upon the waters; still the same hands bear us up: if he let go his hold of us, we drown; if we let go our hold of him, we sink and shriek, as *Peter* did here; who when he saw the wind boistrous, was afraid; and beginning to sink, cried, saying, *Lord save me.*

When he wisht to be bidden to walk unto Christ, he thought of the waters; (*bid me to come to thee on the waters;*) he thought not on the winds, which raged on those waters; or if he thought of a stiff gale; yet that tempestuous and sudden gust was out of his account, and expectation; those evils that we are prepared for, have not such power over us, as those that surprize us: a good waterman sees a dangerous billow coming towards him, and cuts it, and mounts over it with ease; the unheedy is overwhelmed. O Saviour, let my haste to thee be zealous, but not improvident; ere I

set;

set my foot out of the ship, let me foresee the tempest ; when I have cast the worst, I cannot either mis-carry, or complain.

So soon as he began to fear, he began to sink ; whilst he believed, the sea was brass ; when once he began to distrust, those waves were water. He cannot sink, whilst he trusts the power of his master ; he cannot but sink when he misdoubts it : our faith gives us, as courage and boldness, so suc-cess too : our infidelity lays us open to all dangers, to all mischiefs.

It was *Peter's* improvidence, not to foresee ; it was his weakness to fear ; it was the effect of his fear, to sink ; it was his faith that recollects itself, and breaks through his infidelity ; and in sinking could say, *Lord, save me* : his foot could not be so swift in sinking, as his heart in imploring ; he knew who could uphold him from sinking, and being sunk, deliver him ; and therefore he says, *Lord, save me.*

It is both a notable sign and effect of true faith, in sudden extremities to ejaculate holy desires ; and with the wings of our first thoughts to fly up instantly to the throne of grace for present succour. Upon deliberation, it is possible for a man that hath been careless and profane, by good means to be drawn to holy dispositions ; but, on the sudden, a man will appear as he is ; whatever is most rise in the heart will come forth at the mouth : It is good to observe how our surprisals find us ; the rest is but forced ; this is natural ; out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh ; O Saviour, no evil can be swifter than my thought ; my thought shall be upon thee, ere I can be seized upon by the speediest mischief ; at least if I over-run not evils, I shall overtake them.

It was Christ, his Lord, whom *Peter* had offended in distrusting; it is Christ, his Lord, to whom he sues for deliverance; his weakness doth not discourage him from his refuge. O God, when we have displeased thee; when we have sunk in thy displeasure, whither should we flie for aid, but to thee, whom we have provoked: against thee only is our sin; in thee only is our help; in vain shall all the powers of Heaven and Earth conspire to relieve us, if thou withhold from our succour: as we offend thy justice daily by our sins, so let us continually rely upon thy mercy by the strength of our faith *Lord, save us.*

The mercy of Christ is at once sought and found; *immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him*: he doth not say; hadst thou trusted me, I would have safely preserved thee; but, since thou wilt needs wrong my power, and care, with a cowardly diffidence, sink and drown; but rather, as pitying the infirmity of his fearful disciple, he puts out the hand for his relief. That hand hath been stretcht forth, for the aid of many a one that hath never askt it; never any askt it, to whose succour it hath not been stretched. With what speed, with what confidence should we fly to that soveraign bounty, from which never any suitor was sent away empty?

Jesus gave *Peter* his hand; but withal, he gave him a check: *O thou of little faith, why doubtedst thou?* As *Peter's* faith was not pure, but mixed with some distrust; so our Saviour's help was not clear, and absolute, but mixed with some reproof. A reproof, wherein there was both a censure, and an exhortation; a censure of his faith, an exhortation for his doubt; both of them sore and heavy.

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By how much more excellent, and useful a grace faith is, by so much more shameful is the defect of it; and by how much more reason here was of confidence, by so much more blame worthy was the doubt; now *Peter* had a double reason of his confidence; the command of Christ, the power of Christ; the one, in bidding him to come; the other in sustaining him whilst he came; to misdoubt him, whose will he knew, whose power he felt, was well worth a reprehension.

When I saw *Peter* stepping forth upon the waters I could not but wonder at his great faith; yet, behold, ere he can have measured many paces, the judge of hearts taxes him for little faith; our mountains are but motes to God; would my heart have served me to dare the doing of this that *Peter* did? Durst I have set my foot where he did? O Saviour, if thou foundest cause to censure the weakness, and poverty of his faith, what mayst thou well say to mine? They mistake, that think thou wilt take up with any thing; thou lookest for firmitude, and vigour in those graces which thou wilt allow in thy best disciples, no less than truth.

The first steps were confident, there was fear in the next; O the sudden alteration of our affections, of our dispositions; one pace varies our spiritual condition; what hold is there of so fickle creatures, if we be left never so little to ourselves? As this lower world wherein we are, is the region of mutability, so are we (the living pieces of it) subject to a perpetual change: it is for the blessed Saints, and Angels above, to be fixed in good; whilst we are here there can be no constancy expected from us, but in variableness.

As well as our Saviour loves *Peter*, yet he chides him. It is the fruit of his favour, and mercy that we escape judgment, not that we escape reproof;



*shall be made whole* : to make this good, by the touch of the verge of thy garment, thou revivedst one from the verge of death : how must *Jairus* needs now think ; he who by the virtue of his garment can pull this woman out of the paws of death, which hath been twelve years dying, can as well by the power of his word pull my daughter (who hath been twelve years living) out of the jaws of death which hath newly seized on her. It was fit the good ruler should be raised up with this hanſel of thy divine power, whom he came to ſolicit.

That thou mightest looſe no time, thou curedst in thy paſſage ; the ſun ſtands not ſtill to give his influence ; but diffuſes them in his ordinary motion ; how ſhall we imitate thee, if we ſuffer our hands to be out of uſe with good ? our life goes away with our time ; we loſe that which we improve not.

The patient laboured of an iſſue of blood ; a diſeaſe, that had not more pain than ſhame ; nor more natural infirmity, than legal impurity ; time added to her grief ; twelve long years had ſhe languished under this woful complaint ; beſides the tediousneſs, diſeaſes muſt needs get head by continuance ; and ſo much more both weaken nature, and ſtrengthen themſelves, by how much longer they afflict us ; ſo it is in the ſoul ; ſo in the ſtate ; vices which are the ſickneſs of both when they grow inveterate, have a ſtrong plea for their abode and uncontrollableneſs.

Yet more, to mend the matter, poverty (which is another diſeaſe) was ſuperadded to her ſickneſs : *ſhe had ſpent all ſhe had upon phyſicians* ; whiſt ſhe had wherewith to make much of herſelf, and to procure good attendance, choice diet, and all the ſuccours of a diſtreſſed languishment, ſhe could not but find ſome mitigation of her ſorrow ; but now,

want began to pinch her no less than her distemper; and helped to make her perfectly miserable.

Yet, could she have parted from her substance with ease; her complaint had been the less; could the physicians have given her, if not health, yet relaxation, and painlessness, her means had not been misbestowed; but now, *she suffered many things from them*; many an unpleasing potion, many tormenting incisions and divulsions did she endure from their hands; the remedy was equal in trouble to the disease.

Yet had the cost and pain been never so great, could she have hereby purchased health, the match had been happy; all the world were no price for this commodity; but alas, her estate was the worse, her body not the better: her money was wasted, not her disease: art could give her neither cure, nor hope; it were injurious to blame that noble science, for that it always speeds not; notwithstanding all those sovereign remedies men must (in their times) sicken and die: even the miraculous gifts of healing could not preserve the owners from disease, and dissolution.

It were pity but that this woman should have been thus sick; the nature, the durableness, cost, pain, incurableness of her disease both sent her to seek Christ, and moved Christ to her cure; our extremities drive us to our Saviour; his love draws him to be most present and helpful to our extremities; when we are forsaken of all succours, and hopes, we are fittest for his redress; never are we nearer to help, than when we despair of help; there is no fear, no danger but in our own insensibleness.

This woman was a stranger to Christ; it seems she had never seen him; the report of his miracles had lifted her up to such a confidence of his power and



and mercy, as that she said in herself, *if I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole.* The shame of her disease stopt her mouth from any verbal suit; had her infirmity been known, she had been shunned, and abhorred, and disdainfully put back of all the beholders (as doubtless where she was known, the law forced her to live apart) now, she conceals both her grief, and her desire, and her faith; and only speaks (where she may be bold) within herself; *if I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole.*

I seek not mysteries in the virtue of the hem rather than of the garment, indeed, it was God's command to Israel, that they should be marked, not only in their skin, but in their clothes too: those fringes, and ribands upon the borders of their garments, were for holy memorials, of their duty, and God's law; but that hence she supposed to find more virtue, and sanctity in the touch of the hem, than of the coat, I neither dispute nor believe; it was the sight, not the signification that she intimated; not as of the best part, but the utmost. In all likelihood, if there could have been virtue in the garment, the nearer to the body, the more; here was then the praise of this womans faith, that she promiseth herself cure, by the touch of the utmost hem; whosoever would look to receive any benefit from Christ, must come in faith: it is that only which makes us capable of any favour; Satan, the common ape of the Almighty, imitates him also in this point: all his charms, and spells are ineffectual without the faith of the user, of the receiver.

Yea, the endeavour, and issue of all, both human and spiritual things, depends upon our faith: who would commit a plant, or a seed to the earth, if he did not believe to have it nursed in that kindly

bosom?

bosom? What merchant would put himself upon the guard of an inch-board in a furious sea, if he did not trust to the faithful custody of that plank? Who would trade, or travel, or war, or marry, if he did not therein surely trust he should speed well? what benefit can we look to carry from a divine exhortation, if we do not believe it will edify us? from a sacramental banquet (the food of Angels) if we do not believe it will nourish our souls; from our best devotions, if we do not persuade ourselves they will fetch down blessings? O, our vain and heartless services, if we do not say, may I drink but one drop of that heavenly nectar; may I taste but one crumb of that bread of life; May I hear but one word from the mouth of Christ; may I send up but one hearty sigh or ejaculation of an holy desire to my God, I shall be whole.

According to her resolution is her practice; she touched, but she came behind to touch; whether for humility, or for secrecy rather; as desiring to steal a cure, unseen, unnoted; she was a Jewess, and therefore well knew, that her touch was (in this case) no better than a pollution, as hers, perhaps, but not of him. For on the one side, necessity is under no positive law; on the other, the Son of God was not capable of impurity; those may be defiled with a touch, that cannot heal with a touch: he that was above law is not comprised in the law; be we never so unclean, he may heal us, we cannot infect him: O Saviour, my Soul is sick and foul enough with the spiritual impurities of sin, let me by the hand of faith lay hold but upon the hem of thy garment (thy righteousness is thy garment) it shall be both clean, and whole.

Who would not think but a man might lade up a dish of water out of the sea, unmissed? Yet that water

water (though much) is infinite; those drops are within number; that art which hath reckoned, how many corns of sand would make up a world, could more easily compute how many drops of water would make up an ocean; whereas the mercies of God are absolutely infinite, and beyond all possibility of proportion; and yet, this bashful soul cannot steal one drop of mercy from this endless, boundless, bottomless sea of divine bounty, but it is felt, and questioned; and *Jesus* said, *Who touched me?*

Who can now say that he is a poor man that reckons his store, when that God, who is rich in mercy, doth so? he knows all his own blessings, and keeps just tallies of our receipts; delivered so much honour to this man; to that, so much wealth; so much knowledge to one, to another so much strength; how carefully frugal should we be in the notice, account, usage of God's several favours, since his bounty sets all his gifts upon the file? Even the worst servant in the gospel confess his talents, though he employed them not; we are worse than the worst, if either we misknow, or dissemble, or forget them.

Who can forbear the disciples reply; who touched thee, O Lord; the multitude; dost thou ask of one, when thou art pressed by many? In the midst of a throng, dost thou ask *who touched me?*

Yea, but yet, *some one touched me*: all thronged me, but one touched me; how riddle-like soever it may seem to sound; they that thronged me, touched me not; she only touched me that thronged me not, yea that touched me not: even so, O Saviour, others touched thy body with theirs; she touched thy hem with her hand, thy divine power with her soul.

Those two parts whereof we consist (the bodily, the spiritual) do in a sort partake of each other; the soul is the man; and hath those parts, senses,

actions.

actions which are challenged, as proper to the body; this spiritual part hath both an hand and a touch; it is by the hand of faith that the soul toucheth; yea, this alone, both is, and acts all the spiritual senses of that immaterial and divine part: this sees, hears, tasteth, toucheth God; and without this the soul doth none of these. All the multitude then pressed Christ; he took not that for a touch; since faith was away; only she touched him that believed to receive virtue by his touch. Outward fashionableness comes into no account with God; that is only done which the soul doth: it is no hoping that virtue should go from Christ to us, when no hearty desires go forth from us to him: he that is a spirit looks to the deportment of that part which resembleth himself: as without it the body is dead, so without the actions thereof bodily devotions are but carcases.

What reason had our Saviour to challenge this touch: *Somebody touched me*; the multitude (in one extreme) denied any touch at all: *Peter* (in another extreme) affirmed an over-touching of the multitude; betwixt both, he who felt it can say, *somebody touched me*: not all, as *Peter*, not none, as the multitude, but *somebody*: how then, O Saviour, how doth it appear that *somebody* touched thee; *for I perceive virtue is gone out from him*; the effect proves the act; virtue gone out evinces the touch, these two are, in thee convertible; virtue cannot go out of thee but by a touch; and no touch can be of thee without virtue going out from thee. That which is a rule in nature, that every agent works by a contact, holds spiritually too; then dost thou, O God, work upon our souls, when thou touchest our hearts by thy Spirit; then do we react upon thee, when we touch thee by the hand of our faith and confidence in thee; and in both these, virtue goes out



out from thee to us: yet goes not so out as that there is less in thee; in all bodily emanations, whose powers are but finite, it must needs follow, that the more is sent forth, the less is reserved; but, as it is in the sun, which gives us light, yet loseth none ever the more (the luminosity of it being being no whit impaired by that perpetual emission of lightsome beams) so, much more is it in thee, the father of lights. Virtue could not go out of thee without thy knowledge, without thy sending; neither was it in a dislike, or in a grudging exprobatation that thou saidst, *Virtue is gone out from me*: nothing could please thee better than to feel virtue fetched out from thee by the faith of the receiver; it is the nature and praise of good to be communicative, none of us would be other than liberal of our little, if we did not fear it would be lessened by imparting; thou that knowest thy store so infinite that participation doth only glorify, and not diminish it, canst not but be more willing to give, than we to receive. If we take but one drop of water from the sea, or one corn of sand from the shore, there is so much (though insensibly) less, but were we capable of worlds of virtue and benediction from that munificent hand, our enriching could no whit impoverish thee; thou which wert wont to hold it much better to give than to receive, canst not but give gladly. Fear not, O my soul, to lade plentifully at this well, this ocean of mercy, which, the more thou takest, overflows the more.

But why then, O Saviour, why didst thou thus enquire, thus expostulate? was it for thy own sake that the glory of the miracle might thus come to light, which otherwise had been smothered in silence? was it for *Jairus's* sake, that his depressed heart might be raised to a confidence in thee, whose mighty power he saw proved by this cure, whose omniscience he saw proved by the knowledge of the cure? or

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was it chiefly for the woman's sake; for the praise of her faith, for the securing of her conscience.

It was within herself that she said, *If I may but touch*: none could hear this voice of the heart, but he that made it: it was within herself that the cure was wrought: none of the beholders knew her complaint, much less her recovery; none noted her touch, none knew the occasion of her touch; what a pattern of powerful faith had we lost, if our Saviour had not called this act to trial. As her modesty hid her disease, so it would have hid her virtue; Christ will not suffer this secrecy; O the marvellous, but free dispensation of Christ; one while he enjoins a silence to his recured patients, and is troubled with their divulgation of his favour, another while (as here) he will not lose the honour of a secret mercy, but fetches it out by his inquisition, by his profession; *Who hath touched me, for I perceive virtue is gone out from me*; as we see in the great work of his creation, he hath placed some stars in the midst of heaven, where they may be most conspicuous, others he hath set in the southern obscurity, obviout to but few eyes: in the earth he hath planted some flowers and trees in the famous gardens of the World; others no less beautiful, in untracked woods or wild desarts, where they are either not seen, or not regarded.

O God, if thou hast intended to glorify thyself by thy graces in us, thou wilt find means to fetch them forth into the notice of the World; otherwise our very privacy shall content us, and praise thee.

Yet even this great faith wanted not some weakness; it was a poor conceit in this woman, that she thought she might receive so sovereign a remedy from Christ, without his heed, without his knowledge; now, that she might see she had trusted to a power, which was not more bountiful than sensible;  
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and whose goodness did not exceed his apprehension; but one that knew what he parted with, and willingly parted with that which he knew beneficial to so faithful a receiver, he can say, *Somebody hath touched me, for I perceive virtue is gone out from me.* As there was an error in her thought, so in our Saviour's words there was a correction: his mercy will not let her run away with that secret offence; it is a great favour of God to take us in the manner, and to shame our closeness; we scour off the rust from a weapon, that we esteem, and prune the vine we care for; O God, do thou ever find me out in my sin, and do not pass over my least infirmities without a feeling controlment.

Neither doubt I, but that herein, O Saviour, thou didst graciously forecast the securing of the conscience of this (faithful, though over-seen) patient; which might well have afterwards raised some just scruples for the stealing of a cure; for unthankfulness to the author of her cure; the continuance whereof she might have good reason to misdoubt, being surreptitiously gotten, ingratefully concealed; for prevention of all these dangers, and the full quieting of her troubled heart, how fitly, how mercifully didst thou bring forth this close business to the light, and clear it to the bottom? It is thy great mercy to foresee our perils and to remove them, ere we can apprehend the fear of them: as some skilful physician, who perceiving a fever or phrenzy coming, which the distempered patient little misdoubts, by seasonable applications anticipates that grievous malady; so as the sick man knows his safety, ere he can suspect his danger.

Well might the woman think, he who can thus cure, and thus know his cure, can as well know my name and descry my person, and shame and punish my ingratitude; with a pale face, therefore, and a trembling

trembling foot she comes, and falls down before him and humbly acknowledges what she had done, what she had obtained; *But the woman finding she was not bid, &c.*

Could she have perceived that she might have sily gone away with the cure, she had not confessed it; so had she made God a loser of glory, and herself an unthankful receiver of so great a Benefit.

Might we have our own wills, we should be injurious both to God and ourselves; nature lays such plots as would be sure to befool us, and is witty in nothing but deceiving herself. The only way to bring us home, is to find we are found; and to be convinced of the discovery of all our evasions; as some unskilful thief that finds the owner's eye was upon him, in his pilfering lays down his stolen commodity with shame: contrariely, when a man is possessed with a conceit of secrecy and cleanly escape, he is emboldened in his lewdness; the adulterer chuses the twilight, and says, no eye shall see me, and joys in the sweetness of his stolen waters. O God, in the deepest darkness, in my most inward retiredness, when none sees me, when I see not myself, yet let me then see thine all-seeing eye upon me; and if ever mine eyes shall be shut, or held with a prevailing temptation, check me with a speedy reproof, that with this abashed patient, I may come in and confess my error, and implore thy mercy.

It is no unusual thing for kindness to look sternly for the time, that it may endear itself more when it lists to be discovered; with a severe countenance did our Saviour look about him, and ask, *who touched me?* when the woman comes in trembling, and confessing both her act and success, he clears up his brows, and speaks comfortably to her; *Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole, go*

*in*



*in peace.* O sweet and seasonable word, fit for those merciful and divine lips; able to secure any heart, to dispel any fears: still, O Saviour, thou dost thus to us; when we fall down before thee, in an awful dejectedness, thou rearest us up with a chearful and compassionate encouragement; when thou findest us bold and presumptuous, thou lovest to take us down; when humbled, it is enough to have prostrated us; like as that lion of Bethel worries the disobedient prophet, guards the poor ass that stood quaking before him; or, like some mighty wind that bears over a tall elm or cedar, with the same breath that it raiseth a stooping reed; or like some good physician, who finding the body obstructed and surcharged with ill humours, evacuates it, and when it is sufficiently pulled down, raises it up with sovereign cordials.

And still do thou so to my soul, if at any time thou perceivest me stiff and rebellious, ready to face out my sin against thee; spare me not; let me smart till I relent; but a broken and contrite heart, thou wilt not, O Lord; O Lord, do not reject.

It is only thy word which gives what it requires, comfort and confidence. Had any other shaken her by the shoulder, and cheared her up against those oppressive passions, it had been but waste wind; no voice but his, who hath power to remit sin, can secure the heart from the conscience of sin, from the pangs of conscience: in the midst of the sorrows of my heart, thy comforts, O Lord, thy comforts only have power to refresh my soul. Her cure was Christ's act, yet he gives the praise of it to her, *Thy faith hath made thee whole*; he had said before, *Virtue is gone out from me*; now he acknowledges a virtue inherent in her; it was his virtue that cured her, yet he graciously casts this work upon her faith; not that her faith did it, by way of merit, by way of efficiency, but by way of impetration; so much did  
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our Saviour regard that faith which he had wrought in her, that he will honour it with the success of her cure. Such, and the same, is still the remedy of our spiritual diseases, our sins: by faith we are justified, by faith we are saved; thou only, O Saviour canst heal us; thou wilt not heal us but by our faith; not as it issues from us, but as it appropriates thee; the sickness is ours, the remedy is ours: the sickness is our own by nature; the remedy ours by thy grace, both working and accepting it; our faith is no less from thee, than thy cure is from our faith.

O happy dismissal, *Go in peace*: how unquiet had this poor soul formerly been; she had no outward peace with her neighbours; they shunned and abhorred her presence in this condition; yea they must do so: she had no peace in body; that was pained and vexed with so long and foul a disease. Much less had she peace in her mind, which was grievously disquieted with sorrow for her sickness, with anger and discontentment at her torturing physicians, with fear of the continuance of so bad a guest: her soul (for the present) had no peace from the sense of her guiltiness in the carriage of this business, from the conceived displeasure of him, to whom she came for comfort and redress. At once now doth our Saviour calm all these storms; and in one word and act, restores to her peace with her neighbours, peace in herself; peace in body, in mind, in soul. *Go in peace*; even so, Lord, it was for thee only, who art the prince of peace, to bestow thy peace where thou pleasest: our body, mind, soul, estate, is thine, whether to afflict or ease. It is a wonder if all of us do not ail somewhat; in vain shall we speak peace to ourselves, in vain shall the world speak peace to us, except thou say to us as thou didst to this distressed soul, *Go in peace*.

JAIRUS

## XXIII. JAIRUS, and his Daughter.

MATT. ix. 18.—26. comp. LUKE viii. 41.—56.

**H**OW troublesome did the peoples importunity seem to *Jairus*; that great man came to sue unto Jesus, for his dying daughter; the throng of the multitude intercepted him; every man is most sensible of his own necessity: it is no straining courtesy in the challenge of our interest in Christ: there is no unmannerliness in our strife for the greatest share in his presence and benediction.

That only child of this ruler lay a dying when he came to solicit Christ's aid, and was dead whilst he solicited it; there was hope in her sickness; in her extremity there was fear, in her death, despair and impossibility (as they thought) of help; *Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the master*: when we have to do with a meer finite power, this word were but just. He was a prophet no less than a king, that said, whilst the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live; but now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me: but since thou hast to do with an omnipotent agent, know now, O thou faithless messenger, that death can be no bar to his power; how well would it have become thee to have said, *Thy daughter is dead*, but who can tell whether thy God and Saviour will not be gracious to thee that the child may revive? cannot he, in whose hands are the issues of death, bring her back again?

Here were more manners than faith, *Trouble not the Master*; infidelity is all for ease, and thinks every good work tedious; that which nature accounts troublesome,

troublesome, is pleasing and delightful to grace; is it any pain for an hungry man to eat? O Saviour, it was thy meat and drink to do thy father's will; and his will was that thou shouldest bear our griefs and take away our sorrows; it cannot be thy trouble which is our happiness, that we may still sue to thee.

The messenger could not so whisper his ill-news but Jesus heard it; *Jairus* hears that he feared, and was now heartless with so sad tidings; he that resolved not to trouble the master, meant to take so much more trouble to himself, and would now yield to a hopeless sorrow: he whose work it is to comfort the afflicted, rouseth up the dejected heart of that pensive father; *Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole.* The word was not more chearful than difficult: fear not? who can be insensible of so great an evil? where death hath once seized, who can but doubt he will keep his hold; no less hard was it not to grieve for the loss of an only child, than not to fear the continuance of the cause of that grief.

In a perfect faith there is no fear; by how much more we fear, by so much less we believe; well are these two then coupled, *Fear not, believe only*: O Saviour, if thou didst not command us somewhat beyond nature, it were no thanks to us to obey thee; whilst the child was alive, to believe that it might recover, it was no hard task; but now, that she was fully dead, to believe that she should live again, was a work not easy for *Jairus* to apprehend, tho' easy for thee to effect; yet must that be believed; else there is no capacity of so great a mercy: as love, so faith is stronger than death; making those bonds no other than (as *Sampson* did his withes) like threads of tow. How much natural impossibility is there in the return of these bodies from the dust of their  
their



their earth, into which, through many degrees of corruption, they are, at the last, mouldered: fear not, O my soul, believe only; it must, it shall be done.

The sum of *Jairus's* first suit was for the health, not for the resuscitation of his daughter; now that she was dead, he would, if he durst, have been glad to have asked her life; and now, behold, our Saviour bids him expect both her life and her health; *Thy daughter shall be made whole*; alive from her death, whole from her disease.

Thou didst not, O *Jairus*, thou daredst not ask so much as thou receivest: how glad wouldest thou have been, since this last news, to have had thy daughter alive, though weak and sickly; now thou shalt receive her not living only, but sound and vigorous. Thou dost not, O Saviour, measure thy gifts by our petitions, but by our wants and thine own mercies.

This work might have been as easily done by an absent command; the power of Christ was there, whilst himself was away: but he will go personally to the place, that he might be confessed the author of so great a miracle. O Saviour, thou lovest to go to the house of mourning, thy chief pleasure is the comfort of the afflicted; what a confusion there is in wordly sorrow? the mother shrieks, the servants cry out, the people make lamentation, the minstrels howl and strike dolefully; so as the ear might question whether the ditty, or the instrument were more heavy: if ever expressions of sorrow sound well, it is when death leads the quire. Soon doth our Saviour charm this noise; and turns these unseasonable mourners (whether formal, or serious) out of doors. Not that he dislikes musick, whether to condole or comfort; but that he had life in his eye; and would have them know, that he held  
these

these funeral ceremonies, to be too early and long before their time : *give place, for the maid is not dead but sleepeth.* Had she been dead, she had but slept ; now she was not dead, but asleep, because he meant this nap of death should be so short, and her awakening so speedy ; death and sleep are alike to him, who can cast whom he will into the sleep of death, and awake when, and whom he pleaseth out of that deadly sleep.

Before, the people, and domesticks of *Jairus* held *Jesus* for a prophet, now they took him for a dreamer ; *not dead but asleep ?* they that came to mourn cannot now forbear to laugh : have we piped at so many funerals, and seen and lamented so many corpses, and cannot we distinguish betwixt sleep and death ? The eyes are set, the breath is gone, the limbs are stiff and cold ; whoever died, if she do but sleep ? How easily may our reason, or sense befool us in divine matters ? Those that are competent judges in natural things, are ready to laugh God to scorn, when he speaks beyond their compass ; and are by him justly laughed to scorn, for their unbelief : vain and faithless men ! as if that unlimited power of the Almighty could not make good his own word ; and turn either sleep into death, or death into sleep, at pleasure. Ere many minutes, they shall be ashamed of their error and incredulity.

There were witnesses enough of her death, there shall not be many of her restoring ; three choice disciples and the two parents are only admitted to the view and testimony of this miraculous work : the eyes of those incredulous scoffers were not worthy of this honour : our infidelity makes us incapable of the secret favours, and the highest counsels of the almighty.

What

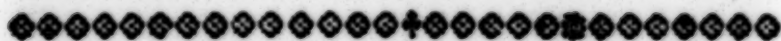
What did these scornors think and say, when they saw him putting the minstrels and people out of doors? doubtless the maid is but asleep; the man fears lest the noise shall awake her; we must speak and tread softly that we disquiet her not; what will he and his disciples do the while? Is it not to be feared they will startle her out of her rest? those that are shut out from the participation of God's counsels think all his words and projects no better than foolishness. But art thou, O Saviour, ever the more discouraged by the derision and censure of these scornful unbelievers? because fools jeer thee, dost thou forbear thy work? Surely I do not perceive that thou heedest them, save for contempt, or carest more for their words than their silence. It is enough that thine act shall soon honour thee and convince them: *He took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise, and her spirit came again, and she arose straightway.*

How could that touch, that call, be other than effectual? he who made that hand, touched it; and he who shall once say, *Arise, ye dead*, said now, *Maid, arise*. Death cannot but obey him who is the Lord of life: the soul is ever equally in his hand who is the God of spirits: it cannot but go and come at his command; when he says, *Maid, arise*, the now dissolved spirit knows his office, his place, and instantly reassumes that room which by his appointment it had left.

O Saviour, if thou do but bid my soul to arise from the death of sin, it cannot lie still; if thou bid my body to arise from the grave, my soul cannot but glance down from her heaven and animate it: in vain shall my sin or my grave offer to withhold me from thee.

The maid revives: not now to languish for a time upon her sick bed; and by some faint degrees to gather

ther an insensible strength, but at once she arises from her death and from her couch: at once she puts off her fever, with her dissolution; she finds her life and her feet at once, at once she finds her feet and her stomach: he commanded to give her meat. Omnipotency doth not use to go the pace of nature: all God's immediate works are (like himself) perfect: he that raised her supernaturally could have so fed her, it was never the purpose of his power to put ordinary means out of office.



**XXIV. *The motion of the two fiery Disciples repelled.***

St. LUKE ix. 51.—56.

**T**HE time drew on, wherein Jesus must be received up; he must take death in his way, Calvary is in his passage to mount Olivet; he must be lift up to the cross, thence to climb into his heaven: yet this comes not into mention, as if all the thought of death were swallowed up in this victory over death; neither, O Saviour, is it otherwise with us, the weak members of thy mystical body: we must die, we shall be glorified; what if death stand before us, we look beyond him at that transcendent glory; how should we be dismayed with that pain which is attended with a blessed immortality.

The strongest receipt against death is the happy estate that follows it: next to that, is the fore-expectation of it and resolution against it: *He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem: Jerusalem the nest of his enemies, the amphitheatre of his conflicts, the fatal place of his death: well did he know the plots and ambushes that were laid for him, and the bloody*



bloody issue of those designs : yet he will go, and goes resolved for the worst. It is a sure and wise way to send our thoughts before us to grapple with those evils, which we know must be incountred ; the enemy is half overcome, that is well prepared for, the strongest mischief may be outfaced with a seasonable fore-resolution.

There can be no greater disadvantage than the suddenness of a surprisal ; O God, what I have not the power to avoid, let me have the wisdom to expect.

The way from *Galilee* to *Judea* lay through the region of *Samaria*, if not the city : Christ now towards the end of his preaching, could not but be attended with a multitude of followers ; it was necessary there should be purveyors ; and harbingers to procure lodgings and provision for so large a troop ; some of his own retinue are addressed to this service ; they seek not for palaces, and delicacies, but for house-room and victuals ; it was he whose the earth was, and the fulness thereof ; whose the heavens are, and the mansions therein ; yet he, who could have commanded angels, sues to *Samaritans* : he that filled and comprehended heaven, sends for shelter in a *Samaritan* cottage ; it was thy choice, O Saviour, to take upon thee the shape, not of a prince, but of a servant ; how can we either neglect means, or despise homeliness, when thou the God of all the world wouldst stoop to the suit of so poor a provision.

We know well in what terms the *Samaritans* stood with the *Jews* ; so much more hostile, as they did more symbolize in matter of religion : no nations were mutually so hateful to each other ; a *Samaritan* bread was no better than swines flesh ; their fire and water was not more grudged than infectious. The looking towards *Jerusalem* was here  
cause

cause enough of repulse : no enmity is so desperate, as that which arises from matter of religion ; agreement in some points when there are differences in the main, doth but advance hatred the more.

It is not more strange to hear the son of God sue for a lodging, than to hear him repelled ; upon so churlish a denial, the two angry disciples return to their master on a fiery errand ; *Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, as Elias did?*

The sons of thunder would be lightning straight ; their zeal, whether as kinsmen, or disciples, could not brook so harsh a refusal ; as they were naturally more hot than their fellows, so now they thought their piety had them be impatient.

Yet they dare not but begin with leave, *Master, wilt thou ?* His will must lead theirs ; their choler cannot drive their wills before his ; all their motion is from him only ; true disciples are like those artificial engines which go no otherwise than they are set ; or like little children, that speak nothing but what they are taught. O Saviour, if we have wills of our own, we are not thine ; do thou set me, as thou wouldst have me go ; do thou teach me what thou wouldst have me say or do.

A mannerly preface leads in a faulty suit ; *Master, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them ?* Faulty, both in presumption, and in desire of private revenge : I do not hear them say ; Master, will it please thee, who art the sole Lord of the heavens, and the elements, to command fire from heaven upon these men ; but, *wilt thou that we command ?* As if, because they had power given them over diseases, and unclean spirits, therefore heaven and earth were in their managing ; how easily might they be mistaken ? their large commission had the just limits ; subjects that have

have magnificent grants from their Princes, can challenge nothing beyond the words of their patent; and if the fetching down fire from heaven were less than the dispossessing of devils (since the devil shall enable the beast to do thus much) yet how possible is it to do the greater, and stick at the less, where both depend upon a delegated power? The magicians of *Ægypt* could bring forth frogs and blood, they could not bring lice; ordinary corruption can do that, which they could not.

It is the fashion of our bold nature, upon an inch given, to challenge an ell; and where we find ourselves graced with some abilities, to flatter ourselves with the faculty of more.

I grant, faith hath done as great things as ever presumption undertook; but there is great difference in the enterprises of both; the one hath a warrant, either by instinct, or express command, the other none at all. Indeed, had these two disciples either meant, or said; Master, if it be thy pleasure to command us to call down fire from heaven, we know thy word shall enable us to do what thou requirest; if the words be ours, the power shall be thine, this had been but holy, modest, faithful; but if they supposed there needed nothing save a leave only, and that (might they be but let loose) they could go alone, they presumed, they offended.

Yet had they thus over-shot themselves in some pious and charitable motion, the fault had been the less; now the act had in it both cruelty, and private revenge; their zeal was not worthy of more praise, than their fury of censure. That fire should fall down from heaven, upon men, is a fearful thing to think of; and that which hath not been often done. It was done in the case of *Sodom*, when those five unclean cities, burned with the unnatural fire of hellish lust; it was done too several

times at the suit of *Elijah*; it was done (in an height of trial) to that great pattern of patience; I find it no more, and tremble at these I find.

But besides the dreadfulneſs of the judgment itſelf, who can but quake at the thought of the ſuddenneſs of this deſtruction, which ſweeps away both body and ſoul in a ſtate of unpreparation. of unrepentance; ſo as this fire ſhould but begin a worſe; this heavenly flame ſhould but kindle that of hell?

Thus unconceivably heavy was the revenge, but what was the offence? We have learned not to think any indignity light, that is offered to the Son of God; but we know theſe ſpiritual affronts are capable of degrees: had theſe *Samaritans* reviled Chriſt, and his train; had they violently aſſaulted him; had they followed him with ſtones in their hands, and blaſphemies in their mouths, it had been a juſt provocation of ſo horrible a vengeance; now the wrong was only negative, they received him not: and that, not out of any particular quarrel, or diſlike of his perſon, but of his nation only; the men had been welcome, had not their country diſtaſted: all the charge that I hear our Saviour give to his diſciples, in caſe of their rejection, is; *if they receive you not ſhake off the duſt off your feet*; yet, this was amongſt their own; and when they went on that ſacred errand of publiſhing the goſpel of peace; theſe were ſtrangers from the common wealth of *Iſrael*; this meaſure was not to preachers, but to travellers; only a mere inhospitality to miſliked gueſts; yet, no leſs revenge will ſerve them, than fire from heaven.

I dare ſay for you, ye holy ſons of *Zebeder*, it was not your ſpleen, but your zeal, that was guilty of ſo bloody a ſuggeſtion; your indignation could not but be ſtirred to ſee the great prophet, and Saviour of the world ſo unkindly repelled; yet all this will



will not excuse you from a rash cruelty, from an inordinate rage.

Even the best heart may easily be miscarried with a well-meant zeal; no affection is either more necessary, or better accepted; love to any object cannot be severed from hatred of the contrary; whence it is that all creatures, which have the concupiscible part, have also the irascible adjoined unto it; anger and displeasure is not so much an enemy, as a guardian and champion of love: whoever therefore is rightly affected to his Saviour, cannot but find much regret at his wrongs; O gracious, and divine zeal, the kindly warmth, and vital temper of piety, whether hast thou withdrawn thyself from the cold hearts of men? Or is this according to the just constitution of the old and decrepit age of the world, into which we are fallen? How many are there that think there is no wisdom but in a dull indifferency, and choose rather to freeze, than burn? How quick and apprehensive are men in cases of their own indignities, how insensible of their Saviour's?

But there is nothing so ill as the corruption of the best; rectified zeal is not more commendable and useful, than inordinate and misguided is hateful and dangerous; fire is a necessary and beneficial element, but if it be once misplaced, and have caught upon the beams of our houses, or stacks of our corn, nothing can be more direful.

Thus, sometimes zeal turns murder (they that kill you shall think they do God service) sometimes frenzy; sometimes rude indiscretion; wholesome and blessed is that zeal that is well grounded; and well governed; grounded upon the word of truth, not upon unstable fancies: governed by wisdom and charity; wisdom to avoid rashness and excess; charity to avoid just offence.

No motion can want a pretence ; *Elias* did so ; why not we ? He was an holy prophet ; the occasion, the place differs not much ; there, wrong was offered to a servant, here to his master ; there to a man, here to a God and man ; if *Elias* then did it, why not we ? There is nothing more perilous than to draw all the actions of holy men into examples : for, as the best men have their weaknesses, so they are not privileged from letting fall unjustifiable actions ; besides that, they may have had perhaps peculiar warrants, signed from heaven, whether by instinct, or special command, which we shall expect in vain. There must be much caution used in our imitation of the best patterns, (whether in respect of the persons, or things ; ) else we shall make ourselves apes, and our acts, sinful absurdities.

It is a rare thing for our Saviour to find fault with the errors of zeal ; even where have appeared sensible weaknesses ; if *Moses* in a sacred rage and indignation, break the tables written with God's own hand, I find him not checked ; here our meek Saviour turns back and frowns upon his furious suitors, and takes them up roundly ; *ye know not of what spirit ye are* ; the faults of uncharitableness cannot be swallowed up in zeal ; if there were any colour to hide the blemishes of this misdisposition, it should be this crimson dye. But he that needs not our lie, will let us know he needs not our injury ; and hates to have a good cause supported by the violation of our charity ; we have no reason to disclaim our passions ; even the Son of God chides sometimes ; yea where he loves ; it offends not that our affections are moved, but that they are inordinate.

It was a sharp word, *ye know not of what spirit ye are* ; another man would not perhaps have felt it ; a disciple doth ; tender hearts are galled with  
that

*The Motion of the two fiery Disciples repelled.* 77  
that which the carnal mind slightheth. The spirit of *Elias* was that, which they meant to assume and imitate; they shall now know their mark was mistaken; how would they have hated to think that any other but God's spirit had stirred them up to this passionate motion? Now they shall know, it was wrought by that ill spirit, whom they professed to hate.

It is far from the good spirit of God to stir up any man to private revenge; or thirst of blood; not an eagle, but a dove was the shape wherein he chose to appear; neither wouldst thou, O God, be in the whirlwind, or in the fire, but in the soft voice: O Saviour, what do we seek for any precedent but thine, whose name we challenge? Thou camest to thine own, thine own received thee not; didst thou call for fire from heaven upon them, didst thou not rather send down water from thy compassionate eyes and weep for them, by whom thou must bleed? Better had it been for us never to have had any spirit, than any but thine; we can be no other than wicked, if our mercies be cruelty.

But is it the name of *Elias* (O ye zealots) which ye pretend for a colour of your impotent desire? Ye do not consider the difference betwixt his spirit and yours; his was extraordinary and heroical, besides the instinct, or secret command of God, for this act of his; far otherwise is it with you, who by a carnal distemper are moved to this furious suggestion. Those that would imitate God's saints in singular actions, must see they go upon the same grounds. Without the same spirit, and the same warrant, it is either a mockery or a sin to make them our copies; *Elias* is no fit pattern for disciples, but their master. *The son of man came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them.*

Then are our actions, and intentions warrantable, and praise worthy, when they accord with his ; O Saviour, when we look into those sacred acts and monuments of thine ; we find many a life which thou preservedst from perishing, some that had perished, by thee recalled ; never any by thee destroyed ; only, one poor fig tree, (as the real emblem of thy severity to the unfruitful) was blasted and withered by thy curse ; but, to man, how favourable and indulgent ever wert thou ? So repelled, as thou wert, so reviled, so persecuted, laid for, sold, betrayed, apprehended, arraigned, condemned, crucified ; yet what one man didst thou strike dead for these heinous indignities ? Yea, when one of thine enemies lost but an ear in that ill quarrel, thou gavest that ear to him, who came to take life from thee ; I find some whom thou didst scourge and correct, as the sacrilegious money-changers ; none whom thou killest : not, that thou either lovest not, or requirest not the duly severe execution of justice ; whose sword is it that Princes bear but thine ? Offenders must smart and bleed ; this is a just sequel, but not the intention of thy coming ; thy will, not thy drift.

Good Princes make wholesome laws for the well ordering of their people ; there is no authority without due coercion ; the violation of these good laws is followed with death, whose end was preservation, life, order : and this, not so much for revenge of an offence past, as for prevention of future mischief.

How can we then enough love and praise thy mercy ; O thou preserver of men ; how should we imitate thy saving, and beneficent disposition towards mankind ? as knowing, the more we can help to save, the nearer we come to thee that camest to save all ; and the more destructive we are, the more

we





upon due deliberation; they purposely waited for this opportunity; no marvel if they thought no attendance long to be delivered from so loathsome, and miserable a disease? Great *Naaman* could be glad to come from *Syria* to *Judæa*, in hope of leaving that hateful guest behind him; we are all sensible enough of our bodily infirmities; O that we could be equally weary of the sickness and deformities of our better part: surely our spiritual maladies are no less than mortal; if they be not healed; neither can they heal alone; these men had died lepers if they had not met with Christ.

O Saviour, give us grace to seek thee, and patience to wait for thee, and then we know *thou* wilt find *us* and *we* shall find remedy.

Where do these lepers attend for Christ; but in a village? and that, not in the street of it; but in the entrance, in the passage to it: the cities, the towns were not for them; the law of God had shut them out from all frequency, from all conversation; care of safety and fear of infection was motive enough to make their neighbours observant of this piece of the law. It is not the body only that is herein respected, by the God of spirits; those that are spiritually contagious must be still and ever avoided; they must be separated from us, we must be separated from them; they from us by just censures; or (if that be neglected) we from them, by a voluntary declination of their familiar conversation; besides the benefit of our safety, wickedness would soon be ashamed of itself if it were not for the encouragement of companions: Solitariness is the fittest antidote for spiritual infection: It were happy for the wicked man, if he could be separated from himself.

These lepers that came to seek Christ, yet finding him, they stand afar off; whether for reverence, or for security; God had enacted this distance: It was their

their charge, if they were occasioned to pass through the streets, to cry out *I am unclean*; it was no less than their duty to proclaim their own infectiousness; there was not danger only but sin in their approach.

How happy were it, if in those wherein there is more peril, there were more remoteness, less silence. O God, we are all lepers to thee; overspread with the loathsome scurf of our own corruptions; it becomes us well, in the conscience of our shame and vileness to stand afar off, we cannot be too awful of thee; too much ashamed of ourselves.

Yet these men, though they be far off in the distance of place, yet they are near in respect of the acceptance of their prayer.

The Lord is near unto all that call upon him in truth. O Saviour, whilst we are far off from thee, thou art near unto us; never dost thou come so close to us, as when in an holy bashfulness we stand furthest off: justly dost thou expect we should be at once bold and bashful; how boldly should we come to the throne of grace, in respect of the grace of that throne; how fearfully in respect of the awfulness of the majesty of that throne, and that unworthiness which we bring with us into that dreadful presence?

He that stands near may whisper, but he that stands afar off must cry aloud; so did these lepers; yet not so much distance as passion strained their throats, that which can give voice to the dumb, can much more give loudness to the vocal.

All cried together; these ten voices were united in one sound; that their conjoined forces might besiege that gracious ear: had every man spoken singly for himself, this had made no noise, neither yet any shew of a fervent importunity; now, as they were all affected with one common disease, so they all set out their throats together; and (though *Jews* and *Samaritans*) agree in one joint supplication; even where there are ten tongues, the word is but one;

that the condescension may be universal. When we would obtain common favours, we may not content ourselves with private and solitary devotions, but must join our spiritual forces together, and set upon God by troops. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour: No faithful prayer goes away unrecompensed; but where many good hearts meet, the retribution must be needs answerable to the number of the petitioners. O holy and happy violence that is thus offered to heaven; how can we want blessings, when so many cords draw them down upon our heads.

It was not the sound, but the matter that carried it with Christ: if the sound were shrill, the matter was faithful, *Jesu Master, have mercy upon us*: no word can better become the mouth of the miserable. I see not where we can meet with fitter patterns; surely they were not verier lepers than we? Why do we not imitate them in their actions, who are too like them in our condition? whether should we seek but to our Jesus? how should we stand aloof in regard of our own wretchedness? how should we lift up our voice in the fervour of our supplications? What should we rather sue for than mercy; *Jesu Master, have mercy upon us*.

O gracious prevention of mercy, both had, and given, ere it can be asked: Jesus, when he saw them, said, *Go shew yourselves to the Priests*: their disease is cured ere it can be complained of; their shewing to the priest presupposes them whole: whole, in his grant, though not in their own apprehension: that single leper that came to Christ before, (*Matt. viii. Luke v.*) was first cured in his own sense, and then was bid to go to the priest, for approbation of the cure: it was not so with these, who are sent to the judges of leprosy, with an intention they shall in the way find themselves healed. There was a different



ferent purpose in both these: in the one, that the perfection of the cure might be convinced, and seconded with a due sacrifice; in the other, that the faith of the patients might be tried in the way, which, if it had not held as strong in the prosecution of their suit, as in the beginning, had (I doubt) failed of the effect: how easily might these lepers think, alas, to what purpose is this? shew ourselves to the priests? what can their eyes do? They can judge whether it be cured (which we see yet it is not) they cannot cure it: this is not now to do; we have been seen enough, and loathed: what can their eyes see more than our own? We had well hoped that Jesus would have vouchsafed to call us to him, and to lay his hands upon us, and to have healed us: these thoughts had kept them lepers still: now shall their faith and obedience be proved by their submission both to this sudden command, and that divine ordination.

That former leper was charged to shew himself to the chief priest; these to the priests; either would serve; the original command runs either to *Aaron*, or to one of his sons: but why to them? Leprosy was a bodily sickness; what is this to spiritual persons? Wherefore serve physicians, if the priests must meddle with diseases? we never shall find those sacred persons to pass their judgments upon fevers, dropsies, palsies, or any other bodily distemper, neither should they on this, were it not that this affection of the body is joined with a legal uncleanness, not as a sickness, but as an impurity must it come under their cognisance: neither this, without a further implication; who but the successors of the legal priesthood are proper to judge of the uncleannesses of the soul? Whether an act be sinful, or in what degree it is such; what grounds are sufficient for the comfortable assurance of repentance, of forgiveness; what

what courses are fittest to avoid the danger of relapses, who is so like to know, so meet to judge, as our teachers? would we in these cases consult oftener with our spiritual guides, and depend upon their faithful advices and well-grounded absolutions: it were safer, it were happier for us: oh the dangerous extremity of our wisdom! our hood-wink'd progenitors would have no eyes, but in the heads of their ghostly fathers: we think ourselves so quick-sighted, that we pity the blindness of our able teachers, none but ourselves are fit to judge of our own leprosy.

Neither was it only the peculiar judgment of the priest that was here intended, but the thankfulness of the patient: that by the sacrifice which he should bring with him, he might give God the glory of his <sup>o</sup> fanation. O God, whomsoever thou curest of this spiritual leprosy, it is reason he should present thee with the true evangelical sacrifices, not of his praises only, but of himself, which are reasonable and living; we are still leprous if we do not first see ourselves foul, and then find ourselves thankfully serviceable.

The lepers did not, would not go of themselves, but are sent by Christ, *Go, and shew yourselves.* And why sent by him? was it in obedience to the law? was it out of respect to the priesthood? was it for prevention of cavils? was it for conviction of gainsayers? or was it for confirmation of the miracle? Christ that was above the law, would not transgress it; he knew this was his charge by *Moses*; how justly might he have dispensed with his own; but he will not; though the law doth not bind the maker; he will voluntarily bind himself. He was within the ken of his <sup>†</sup> *Consummatus est*; yet would not anticipate that approaching end; but holds the law on foot, till his last pace. This was but a branch of the ceremonial, yet would he not slight

\* Cure. † *It is finished.*

flight it, but in his own person gives example of a studious observation.

How carefully should we submit ourselves to the royal laws of our Creator, to the wholesome laws of our superiours, whilst the Son of God would not but be so punctual in a ceremony.

Whilst I look to the persons of those priests, I see nothing but corruption; nothing but professed hostility to the true Messiah; all this cannot make thee, O Saviour, to remit any point of the observance due to their places; their function was sacred, whatever their persons were; though they have not the grace to give thee thy due, thou wilt not fail to give them theirs; how justly dost thou expect all due regard to thine evangelical priesthood, who gavest so curious respect to the legal? It were shame the synagogue should be above the church, or, that priesthood which thou meantest speedily to abrogate, should have more honour than that which thou meantest to establish, and perpetuate.

Had this duty been neglected, what clamours had been raised by his emulous adversaries; what scandals? though the fault had been the patients, not the physicians. But they that watched Christ so narrowly, and were apt to take so poor exceptions, at his Sabbath-cures, at the unwashed hands of his disciples; how much more would they have calumniated him, if by his neglect the law of leprosy had been palpably transgressed. Not only evil must be avoided, but offence; and that, not on our parts, but on others; that offence is ours, which we might have remedied.

What a noble and irrefragable testimony was this to the power, to the truth of the Messiah? How can these *Jews* but either believe, or be made inexcusable in not believing? when they shall see so many lepers come at once to the temple, all cured by a secret will, without word, or touch; how can they  
chuse

chuse but say, this work is supernatural ; no limited power could do this ; how is he not God, if his power be infinite ? Their own eyes shall be witnesses, and judges of their own conviction.

The cure is done by Christ more exquisitely than by art or nature ; yet it is not publicly assured and acknowledged, till according to the Mosaical law, certain subsequent rights be performed ; there is no admittance into the congregation, but by sprinkling of blood : O Saviour, we can never be ascertained of our cleansing from that spiritual leprosy, wherewith our souls are tainted, but by the sprinkling of thy most precious blood ; wash us with that and we shall be whiter than snow. This act of shewing to the Priest was not more required by the law than pre-required of these lepers, by our Saviour, for the trial of their obedience ; had they now stood upon terms with Christ, and said, we will first see what cause there will be to shew ourselves to the Priests ; they need not see our leprosy, we shall be glad they should see our cure, do thou work that which we shall shew, and bid us shew what thou hast wrought ; till then, excuse us ; it is our grief and shame to be seen too much : they had been still lepers.

It hath been ever God's custom by small precepts to prove mens dispositions ; obedience is as well tried in a trifle, as in the most important charge ; yea so much more, as the thing required is less ; for, oft times those who would be careful in many affairs, think they may neglect the smallest ; what command soever we receive from God, or our superiors, we must not scan the weight of the thing, but the authority of the commander, either difficulty, or slightness are vain pretences for disobedience.

These lepers are wiser ; they obeyed, and went ; what was the issue ? As they went they were healed ; lo ? had they stood still, they had been lepers ; now they went, they are whole ; what haste the blessing  
makes



makes to overtake their obedience? This walk was required by the very law, if they should have found themselves healed; what was it to prevent the time a little; and to do that sooner upon hopes, which upon sense they must do after? the horror of the disease adds to the grace of the cure; and that is so much more gracious as the task is easier; it shall cost them but a walk. It is the bounty of that God whom we serve to reward our worthless endeavours with infinite requitals; he would not have any proportion betwixt our acts, and his remunerations.

Yet besides this recompence of obedience, O Saviour, thou wouldst herein have respect to thine own just glory; had not these lepers been cured in the way, but in the end of their walk, upon their shewing to the priests, the miracle had lost much light; perhaps the priests would have challenged it to themselves, and have attributed it to their prayers; perhaps the lepers might have thought it was thy purpose to honour the priests as the instruments of that marvellous cure; now there can be no colour of any others participation; since the leprosy vanishes in the way, as thy power, so thy praise admits of no partners.

And now, methinks, I see what an amazed joy there was amongst these lepers, when they saw themselves thus suddenly cured; each tells other, what a change he feels in himself; each comforts the other with the assurance of his outward clearness, each congratulates the others happiness, and thinks, and says how joyful this news will be to their friends and families; their society now serves them well to applaud, and heighten their new felicity.

The miracle indifferently wrought upon all, is differently taken; all went forward (according to the appointment) toward the priests; all were obedient; one only was thankful: all were cured; all  
saw

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saw themselves cured ; their sense was alike, their hearts were not alike : what could make the difference but grace ? and who could make the difference of grace, but he that gave it ? He that wrought the cure in all, wrought the grace not in all, but in one ; the same act, the same motives, are not equally powerful to all : where the ox finds grass, the viper poison ; we all pray, all hear, one goes away bettered, another cavils : *wills* make the difference, but who makes the difference of wills, but he that made them ? He that creates the new heart, leaves a stone in one bosom, puts flesh into another ; it is not in him that willeth nor in him that runneth, but in God that hath mercy ; O God, if we look not up to thee, we may come and not be healed ; we may be healed, and not be thankful.

This one man breaks away from his fellows, to seek Christ. Whilst he was a leper, he consoled with lepers ; now that he is healed, he will be free ; he saith not, I came with these men, with them I will go ; if they will return I will accompany them ; if not, what should I go alone ? As I am not wiser than they, so I have no more reason to be more thankful ; there are cases, wherein singularity is not lawful only, but laudable ; thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil ; I and my house will serve the Lord ; it is a base and unworthy thing for a man so to subject himself to others examples, as not sometimes to resolve to be an example to others ; when either evil is to be done, or good neglected, how much better is it, to go the right way alone, than to err with company.

O noble patron of thankfulness, what speed of retribution is here ? no sooner doth he see his cure, than he hastes to acknowledge it ; the benefit shall not die, not sleep in his hand ; late professions of our obligations favour of dullness and ingratitude.

What

What a laborious and diligent officiousness is here? he stands not still, but puts himself to the pains of a return; what an hearty recognition of the blessing? His voice was not more loud in his suit, than in his thanks: what an humble reverence of his benefactor? He falls down at his feet: as acknowledging at once beneficence and unworthiness; it were happy for all *Israel*, if they could but learn of this *Samaritan*.

This man is sent with the rest to the priests; he well knew this duty a branch of the law of ceremonies which he meant not to neglect; but his heart told him there was a moral duty of professing thankfulness to his benefactor, which called for his first attendance; first therefore he turns back, ere he will stir forward. Reason taught this *Samaritan* (and us in him) that ceremony must yield to substance; and that main points of obedience must take place of all ritual complements.

It is not for nothing that note is made of the country of this thankful leper; *He was a Samaritan*; the place is known, and branded with the infamy of a Paganish misreligion; outward disadvantage of place or parentage cannot block up the way of God's grace, and free election; as contrarily, the privileges of birth and nature avail us nothing in spiritual occasions.

How sensible wert thou, O Saviour, of thine own beneficence? *Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?* The trooping of these lepers together did not hinder thy reckoning; it is both justice and wisdom in thee to keep a strict account of thy favours. There is an wholesome, and useful art of forgetfulness in us men, both of benefits done, and of wrongs offered; it is not so with God; our injuries indeed he soon puts over; making it no small part of his stile, that he forgives iniquities;  
but

but for his mercies, there is no reason he should forget them: they are worthy of more than our memory. His favours are universal over all his works; there is no creature that tastes not of his bounty; his sun and rain are for others, besides his friends; but none of his good turns escapes either his knowledge, or record; why should not we, O God, keep a book of our receipts from thee, which agreeing with thine may declare thee bounteous, and us thankful?

Our Saviour doth not ask this by way of doubt, but of exprobatation? Full well did he count the steps of those absent lepers; he knew where they were, he upbraids their ingratitude, that they were not where they should have been. It was thy just quarrel, O Saviour, that whilst one *Samaritan* returned, nine *Ifraelites* were healed, and returned not; had they been all *Samaritans*, this had been faulty; but now they were *Ifraelites*, their ingratitude was more foul than their leprosy: the more we are bound to God, the more shameful is our unthankfulness. There is scarce one in ten that is careful to give God his own; this neglect is not more general than displeasing; Christ had never missed their presence, if their absence had not been hateful, and injurious.



## XXVII. *The Pool of Bethesda.*\*

JOHN v. 1.—9. &c.

**O**therwhere, ye may look long, and see no miracle; but here behold two miracles in one view, the former, of the angel curing diseases; the latter, of the God of angels, *Christ Jesus*, preventing the angel in his cure: even the first, *Christ* wrought

\* N. B. This is in the form of a Sermon as deliver'd by the Bishop.



wrought by the angel, the second immediately by himself. The first is incomparable, for (as *Montanus* truly observes) there is no one perpetual miracle but this one, in the whole book of God; be content to spend this hour with me in the porches of *Bethesda*, and consider with me, the \*topography, the † aitiology, the ‡ chronography of this miracle: these three limit our speech, and your patient attention; the chronography (which is first in place and time) offers us two heads. 1. A feast of the *Jews*. 2. Christ going up to the feast. The *Jews* were full of holy days, both of God's institution, and the church's: of God's, both weekly, monthly, anniversary: weekly, that one of seven, which I would to God we had learned of them to keep better: in this regard it was that *Seneca* said, the *Jews* did loose the seventh, part of their life. Monthly, the new moons, *Numb.* xviii. Anniversary, *Easter*, pentecost, and the *September* feasts. The church's, both the purim by *Mardocheus*; and the eucenia by *Judas Maccabeus*, which yet Christ honoured by his solemnization. *John* x. Surely, God did this for the chearfulness of his people in his service: hence the church hath laudably imitated this example: to have no feasts is fullen: to have too many is Paganish and Superstitious: neither would God have cast the christian *Easter* upon the just time of the *Jewish* passover; and their *Whitsuntide* upon the *Jewish* pentecost; if he would not have had these feasts continued: and why should the christian church have less power than the *Jewish* synagogue? Here was not a mere feriation, but a feasting; they must appear before God with gifts. The tenth part of their increase must be spent upon the three solemn feasts, besides their former tithes to *Levi*, *Deut.* xiv. 23.

Their

\* Places. † Cause. ‡ Time.

There was no holy day, wherein they feasted above six hours; and in some of them tradition urged them to their quantities of drink: and *David* when he would keep holy days to the ark, allows every *Israelite* a cake of bread, a piece of flesh, a bottle of wine: not a dry dinner, not a mere drinking of wine, without meat, but to make up a perfect feast, bread, flesh, and wine. 2 *Sam.* vi. The true purims of this island are those two feasts of *August*, and *November*: he is no true *Israelite* that keeps them not, as the days which the Lord hath made: when are joy and triumphs seasonable if not at feasts? but not excess: pardon me, I know not how feasts are kept at the court; but, as *Job*, when he thought of the banquets of his sons, says, it may be they have sinned, so let me speak at peradventures: if sensual immoderation should have set her foot into these christian feasts, let me, at least, say with indulgent *Ely*, It is no good report my sons. Do ye think that *St. Paul's* rule, not in surfeiting and drunkenness, was for work days only: the *Jews* had a conceit, that on their sabbath, and feast days, the devils fled from their cities, to the shady mountains; let it not be said, that, on our christian feasts, they should *montibus aulam petere*, from the mountains, seek the court: and that he seeks, and finds not, *loca arida*, but *madida*\*; God forbid, that christians should sacrifice to *Bacchus*, instead of the ever living God; and that, on the day, when you should have been blown up by treacherous fire from earth to heaven, you should fetch down the fire of God's anger from heaven upon you, by swilling, and surfeits: God forbid: God's service is one thing necessary, saith *Christ*: a drunken man is a superfluous creature, saith *Ambrose*: how ill do those two agree together: this

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\* Not dry, but moist places.

I have been bold to say out of caution, not of reproof.

Thus much, that there was a feast of the *Jews* : now, what feast it was, is questionable, whether the passover, as *Ireneus*, and *Beza* with him, thinks upon the warrant of *John* iv. 35. where our Saviour had said, yet four months, and then comes harvest : or whether pentecost, which was fifty days from the shaking of the sheaf (that was *Easter Sunday*) as *Cyrill*, *Chrysostom*, *Theophylact*, *Euthymius*, and some later : or whether one of the *September* feasts, as some others ; the excellency of the feast makes for *Easter* ; (the feast by way of eminence) the number of interpreters for pentecost, the number of feasts for *September* ; for, as God delighted in the number of seven, the seventh day was holy, the seventh year, the seventh seven year : so he shewed it in the seventh month, which reserves his number still, *September* ; the first day whereof was the sabbath of trumpets ; the tenth, the day of expiation : and on the fifteenth began the feasts of Tabernacles for seven days ; it is an idleness to seek that which we are never the better, when we have found : what if *Easter* ? what if Tabernacles ? what if Pentecost ? what loss, what gain is this ? *John* had eased us of much trouble if he had added but one word, saith *Maldonat* ; but for us, God give them sorrow which love it, this is one of *St. Paul's* vain disputations, that he forbids *Timothy*, (which is the subject thereof) one of them, which he calls foolish and unlearned questions, 2 *Tim.* ii. 23. Yea, how much mischief is done by too much subtilty ? saith *Seneca*. These are for some idle cloisters that have nothing to do but to pick straws in divinity : like to *Appian* the grammarian, that with long discourse would pick out of *Homer's* first verse of his *Iliads*, and the first word



word (*μῦθος*) the number of the books of *Iliads* and *Odysses*, or like *Dydimus* that spent some of his 4000 books about which was *Homer's* country, who was *Æneas's* true mother, what the age of *Hecuba*, how long it was betwixt *Homer* and *Orpheus*; or those wise critics, of whom *Seneca* speaks, that spend whole volumes, whether *Homer* or *Hesiod* were the elder; they vent an unprofitable skill; as he said, let us be content with the learned ignorance of what God hath concealed, and know that what he hath concealed will not avail us to know.

Rather, let us inquire why Christ would go up to the feast, I find two silken cords that drew him up thither. 1. His obedience. 2. His desire of manifesting his glory.

First, It was a general law; all males must appear thrice a year before the Lord; behold he was the God, whom they went up to worship, at the feast, yet he goes up to worship: He began his life in obedience, when he came into his mother's belly, to *Bethlehem*, at the taxation of *Augustus*, and so he continues it; he knew his due; of whom do the kings of the earth receive tribute? of their own, or of strangers? then their sons are free; yet, he that would pay tribute to *Cæsar*, will also pay this tribute of obedience, to his father; he that was above the law, yields to the law, he would satisfy the law, though he were not under the law. The spirit of God says, he learned obedience in that he suffered: surely also, he taught obedience in that he did: This was his (*ἡμετέρας*) to *John Baptist*; it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness, he will not abate his father one ceremony: it was dangerous to go up to that *Jerusalem* which he had left before, for their malice; yet now, he will go up again, his obedience drew him up to that bloody feast, wherein himself was sacrificed,

how



how much more now, that he might sacrifice? what can we plead to have learned of Christ if not his first lesson, obedience? The same proclamation that Gideon made to *Israel*, he makes still to us, as ye see me do, so do ye. Whatsoever therefore God enjoins us, either immediately by himself or mediately by his deputies, if we will be christians, we must so observe, as those that know themselves, bound to tread in his steps, that said, in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I desired to do thy will, O God, Psal. xl. 6. *I will have obedience* (saith God) *and not sacrifice*; but where sacrifice is obedience, he will have obedience in sacrificing, therefore Christ went up to the feast.

The second motive was the manifestation of his glory, if we be the light of the world, which are so much snuff, what is he that is the father of lights? It was not for him to be set under the bushel of *Nazareth*, but upon the table of *Jerusalem*; thither, and then was the confluence of all the tribes; many a time had Christ passed by this man before, when the streets were empty; for there he lay many years yet heals him not till now; he that sometimes modestly steals a miracle with a *vide ne cui dixeris*, see thou tell no man, that no man might know it, at other times does wonders upon the scaffold of the world, that no man might be ignorant, and bids proclaim it on the house tops. It was fit the world should be thus publicly convinced, and, either won by belief, or lost by inexcusableness; good, the more common it is, the better: I will praise thee, saith *David*, in the great congregation, glory is not got in corners; no man (say the envious kinsmen of Christ) keeps close, and would be famous; No, nor that would have God celebrated; the best opportunities must be taken in glorifying him; he that

that would be crucified at the feast, that his death and resurrection might be more famous, will, at the feast, do miracles, that his divine power might be approved openly: Christ, is the flower of the field, and not of the garden, saith *Bernard*; God cannot abide to have his graces smothered in us: *I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart*, saith the Psalmist. *Absalom* when he would be notoriously wicked, does his villainy publicly in the eyes of the sun, under no curtain but heaven; he that would do notable service to God, must do it conspicuously: *Nicodemus* gained well by Christ, but Christ got nothing by him, so long as like a night bird, he never came to him but with owls and bats; then he began to be a profitable disciple when he durst oppose the Pharisees in their condemnation of Christ though indefinitely; but most when in the night of his death, the light of his faith brought him openly to take down the sacred corps before all the gazing multitude, and to embalm it; when we confess God's name with the Psalmist before kings; when kings defenders of the faith, profess their religion in public, and everlasting monuments to all nations, to all times; this is glorious to God, and in God to them. It is no matter how close evils be, nor how public good is.

This is enough for the chronography, the topography follows. I will not here stand to shew you the ignorance of the vulgar translation, in joining (*probatica* and *piscina* together) against their own fair vatican copy, with other ancient; nor spend time to discuss whether (αἴμα or πύλη) be here understood for the substantive of *οπισθεν*; it is most likely to be that sheep-gate spoken of in *Exra*; nor, to shew how ill (*piscina*) in the Latin answers the Greek *καλυμβήρα*; ours term it, *a pool*, better than any

any Latin word can express it; nor to show you (as I might) how many public pools were in *Jerusalem*; nor to discuss the use of this pool, whether it were for washing the beasts to be sacrificed, or to wash the entrails of the sacrifice: whence I remember *Jerom* fetches the virtue of the water, and, in his time thought he discerned some redness, as if the blood spilt four hundred years before, could still retain its first tincture in a liquid substance; besides that, it would be a strange swimming pool that were brewed with blood, and this was *καλυμβηδα*. This conceit arises from the error of the construction in mismatching *καλυμβηδα* with *προβατινα*; neither will I argue whether it should be *Bethsida*, or *Bethaida*, or *Bethsheda*, or *Bethesda*, if either you or myself knew not how to be rid of time, we might easily wear out as many hours in this pool, as this poor impotent man did years; but it is edification that we affect, and not curiosity. This pool had five porches; neither will I run here with St. *Austin* into allegories; that this pool was the people of the *Jews*, *aquæ multæ*, *populus multus*, and these five porches the law in the five books of *Moses*; nor stand to confute *Adricomius*, which out of *Josaphus* would persuade us, that these five porches were built by *Solomon*, and that this was *stagnum Solomonis*, for the use of the temple. The following words shew the use of the porches: for the receipt of impotent, sick, blind, halt, withered, that waited for the moving of the water. It should seem it was walled about to keep it from cattle, and these five vaulted entrances were made by some benefactors, for the more convenience of attendance. Here was the mercy of God seconded by the charity of men. If God will give cure they will give harbour; surely it is a good matter to put our hand to God's, and to further good works with convenience of injoying them.

*Jerusalem* was grown a city of blood, to the persecution of the prophets, to a wilful despight of what belonged to her peace. To a profanation of God's temple, to a mere formality in God's services, and yet, here were public works of charity in the midst of her streets: we may not always judge of the truth of piety, by charitable actions. *Judas* disbursed the money for Christ, there was no traitor but he; the poor traveller that was robbed and wounded betwixt *Jerusalem* and *Jerico*, was passed over, first by the priest, then the Levite, at last the Samaritan came and relieved him: his religion was naught, yet his act was good; the priest's and Levite's religion good, their uncharity ill. *Novatus* himself was a martyr, yet a schismatic. Faith is the soul, and good works are the breath, saith St. *James*; but, as you see in a pair of bellows there is a forced breath without life; so in those that are puffed up with the wind of ostentation, there may be charitable works without faith; the church of *Rome*, unto her four famous orders of Jacobins, Franciscans, Augustines and Carmelites, have added a fifth of Jesuits, and, like another *Jerusalem*, for those five leprous and lacerary orders, hath built five porches, that if the watter of any state be stirred, they may put in for a share; how many cells and convents hath she raised for these miserable cripples; and now she thinks (though she exalt herself above all that is called God, tho' she dispense with, and against God; tho' she fall down before every block and wafer, tho' she kill kings, and equivocate with magistrates) she is the only city of God: she is worthy for she hath built a synagogue. Are we more orthodox, and shall not we be as charitable? I am ashamed to think of rich noblemen and merchants that dye and give nothing to our five porches of *Bethesda*; what shall we say? Have they



they made their mammon their God, instead of making friends with their mammon to God? Even, when they die will they not (like *Ambrose's* good usurers) part with that which they cannot hold, that they may get that which they cannot lose? Can they begin their will, in *Dei nomine Amen*; and give nothing to God? Is he only a witness and not a legatee? Can we bequeath our souls to Christ in heaven, and give nothing to his limbs on earth? and if they will not give, yet will they not lend to God? He that gives to the poor lends to God: will they put out to any but God? and then, when instead of giving security, he receives with one hand and pays with another, receives our bequest and gives us glory: Oh damnable niggardliness of vain men, that shames the gospel, and loses heaven: let me shew you a *Bethesda* that wants porches; what truer house of effusion than the church of God, which sheds forth waters of comfort, yea of life? behold some of the porches of this *Bethesda* so far from building, that they are pulled down; it is a wonder if the demolished stones of God's house have not built some of yours, and, if some of you have not your rich suits gaurded with souls. There were wont to be reckoned three wonders of *England*; the *Churches*, the *Women*, the *Wool*. The *Women* may pass still, who may justly challenge wonder for their vanity, if not their person; as for the *Wool*, if it be wonderful alone, I am sure it is ill joyned with the *Church*; the church is fleeced, and hath nothing but a bare pelt left upon her back; and, as for the *Churches*, either men have said with the *Babylonians*, down with it, down with it, even to the ground; or else in respect of the maintenance, with *Judas*, Why was this waste? How many remorseful souls have sent back with *Jacob's* sons

their money in their sacks mouths : How many great testators have in their last will returned the anathematized peculium of impropriations to the church, chusing rather to impair their hire, than to burthen their souls ? *Cyprian* saith, whilst thou fearest to lose thy patrimony for thy own good, thou perisheth with thy patrimony : ye great men spend not all your time in building castles in the air, or houses in the sand, but set your hands and purses to the building of the porches of *Bethesda* : it is a shame for a rich Christian to be like a Christmas-box, that receives all, and nothing can be got out till it be broken in pieces, or like unto a drown'd man's hand, that holds whatsoever it gets. To do good, and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

This was the place, what was the use of it ; all sorts of patients were at the bank of *Bethesda* ; where should cripples be but at the spittle ? the sick, blind, lame, withered, all that did either complain of sickness or impotency, were there ; in natural course, one receipt heals not all diseases, no nor one agent ; one is an oculist, another a bone-fetter, another a surgeon ; but a'l diseases are alike to the supernatural power of God.

*Hippocrates* (though the prince of physicians) yet swears by *Esculapius* he will never meddle with cutting of the stone : there is no disease that art will not meddle with, there are many that it cannot cure ; the poor *Hemorrhoidissa* was eighteen years in the physicians hands, and had purged away both her body and her substance ; yea some it kills instead of healing : whence one *Hebrew* word signifies both physicians and dead men : but behold here, all sicknesses

nesses cured by one hand, and by one water. Oh all ye that are spiritually sick and diseased come to the pool of *Bethesda*, the blood of Christ : Do ye complain of the blindness of your ignorance ? here ye shall receive clearness of sight : Of the distemper of passions ? here ease : Of the superfluity of your sinful humours ? here evacuation : Of the impotency of your obedience ? here integrity : Of the dead witheredness of good affections ? here life and vigour ; whatsoever your infirmity be, come to the pool of *Bethesda*, and be healed.

All these may be cured ; yea shall be cured at leisure ; all must wait, all must hope in waiting : methinks I see how enviously these cripples look, one upon another, each thinking other a lett, each watching to prevent other, each hoping to be next, like *emulous* courtiers, that gape and vie for the next preferment ; and think it a pain to hope, and a torment to be prevented : but *Bethesda* must be waited on : he is worthy of his crutches that will not stay God's leisure for his cure ; there is no virtue, no success without patience : waiting is a familiar lesson with courtiers, and here we had all need of it : One is sick of an overflowing of the gall ; another of a tumor of pride ; another of the tentigo of lust, another of the vertigo of inconstancy ; another of the choking squinancy of curses and blasphemies : One of the boulimy of gluttony ; another of the pleuritical stitches of envy : One of the contracting cramp of covetousness ; another of the atrophy of unproficiency : One is hide-bound with pride ; another is consumed with emulation ; another rotten with corrupt desires, and we are so much the sicker, if we feel not these distempers : O that we could wait at the *Bethesda* of God, and attend diligently upon his ordinances : we could no more fail of cure, than now we can hope for cure ; we

wait hard, and endure much for the body, what toil do we take that we may toil yet longer! we endure many certain pains for the addition of a few uncertain days, saith *Austin*: why will we not do thus for the soul? without waiting it will not be. The cripple *Acts. iii. 4.* was bidden *βίβω τίς ἵπας*, look up to us: he looked up, it was cold comfort that he heard; silver and gold have I none: but the next clause made amends for all, *rise and walk*: and this was, because he attended expecting, verse 5. Would we be cured, it is not for us to snatch at *Bethesda*, as a dog at *Nilus*; not to draw water, and away, as *Rebecca*; nor to set us a while upon the banks, as the *Israelites* by the rivers of *Babylon*, but we must dwell in God's house, wait at *Bethesda*; but what shall I say to you courtiers, but even as *St. Paul* to his *Corinthians*, ye are full, ye are rich, ye are strong, without us: many of you come to this place not as to *Bethel*, the house of God, or *Bethesda*, the house of effusion, but as to *Bethaven*, the house of vanity: If ye have not lost your old custom, there are more words spoken in the outer closet, by the hearers, than in the chapel by the preacher; what do ye think of sermons, as matters of formality, as very superfluities, as your own idle complements, which either ye hear not, or believe not? What do ye think of yourselves? Have ye only a postern to go to heaven by yourselves, where thorough ye can go, besides the foolishness of preaching? or do ye sing that old pelagian note, What need have I of God? What should I say to this? But as for our household sermons, our auditors are like the fruit of a tree, in an unreasonable year, or like a wood new felled, that hath some few spires left for standers, some poles distance, or like the



the tithe sheaves in a field when the corn is gone ; as he said, it is true ye have more sermons and more excellent, than all the courts under heaven put together ; but as *Austin* said well, What am I the better for a good thing if I use it not well ? Let me tell you, all these forcible means, not well used, will set you the further off from heaven : if the chapel were the *Bethesda* of promotion, what thronging would there be into it : yea if it were but some mask-house, wherein a glorious (though momentary) show were to be presented, neither white staves, nor halberts could keep you out ; behold here, ye are offered the honour to be (by this seed of regeneration) the sons of God. The Kingdom of heaven, the crown of glory, the scepter of majesty ; in one word, eternal life is here offered, and performed to you : O let us not so far forget ourselves, as in the ordinances of God to condemn our own happiness : but let us know the time of our visitation, let us wait reverently, and intently upon this *Bethesda* of God, that when the angel shall descend and move the water, our souls may be cured, and, through all the degrees of grace, may be carried to the full height of their glory.



## XXVII. CHRIST Transfigured.

MATT. xvii. 1—13. comp. LUKE ix. 28. &c.

**T**HERE is not in all divinity an higher speculation, than this of Christ transfigured : suffer me therefore to lead you up by the hand into mount *Tabor* (for nearer to heaven ye cannot come while ye are upon earth) that you may see him glorious

upon earth, (the region of his shame and abasement) who is now glorious in heaven, the throne of his majesty. He that would not have his transfiguration spoken of till he were raised, would have it spoken of all the world over, now that he is raised, and ascended, that by this momentary glory, we may judge of the eternal. The circumstances shall be to us, as the skirts of the hill, which we will climb up lightly; the time, place, attendants, company. The time, (after six days) the place, an high hill, apart; the attendants, (*Peter, James, John,*) the company, *Moses, and Elias,* which when we have passed, on the top of the hill shall appear to us that sight, which shall once make us glorious, and in the mean time, happy.

All three evangelists accord in the *Terminus à quâ*, that it was immediately after those words (there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste, of death, till they have seen the Son of man come in his kingdom,) wherein methinks, the *act* comments upon the words; *Peter, James, and John,* were these some: they tasted not of death, till they saw this heavenly image of the royalty of Christ glorified: but the *Terminus quâ* disagrees a little: *Matthew* and *Mark* say (after six) *Luke* about eight days, which as they are easily reconciled by the usual distinction of *inclusivè* and *exclusivè*, necessary for all computations, and *Luke's* (about eight) so methinks, seems to intimate God's seventh day, the Sabbath; why should there be else so precise mention of six days after, and about eight, but to imply that day, which was betwixt the sixth, and eighth? God's day was fittest for so divine a work, and well might that day which imported God's rest and man's glory, be used for the clear representation of the rest, and glory of God and man;

man: but in this conjecture (for ought I know) I go alone; I dare not be too resolute: certainly, it was the seventh, whether it were that seventh, the seventh after the promise of the glory of his kingdom exhibited: and this perhaps not without a mystery; God teacheth both by words and acts, saith *Hilary*, that after six ages of the world should be Christ's glorious appearance, and our transfiguration with him; but I know what our Saviour's farewell was it is not for us to know; but if we may not know, we may conjecture, yet not above that we ought, saith *St. Paul*; we may not be too wise above what is written, as *Tertullian's* phrase is.

For the place, tradition hath taken it still for *Tabor*, I list not to cross it without warrant: this was an high hill indeed: thirty furlongs high saith *Josephus*, *mira rotunditate sublimis*, saith *Jerome*: and so steep, that some of our *English* travellers that have desired to climb it of late, have been glad to give it up in the midway, and to measure the rest with their eyes; doubtless this hill was a symbol of heaven, being near it as in situation, in resemblance: heaven is expressed usually by the name of God's hill: and nature, or this appellation taught the heathens to figure it, by their *Olympus*; all divine affairs of any magnificence were done on hills: on the hill of *Sinai* was the law delivered, on the hill of *Moriah* was *Isaac* to be sacrificed, whence *Abraham's* posy is, *on the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*; on the hill of *Rephidim* stood *Moses* with the rod of God in his stretched hand, and figured him crucified upon the hill, whom *Josua* figured victorious in the valley: on the hills of *Ebal*, and *Gerizim* were the blessings and curses; on *Carmel* was *Elijah's* sacrifice; the phrontisteria, schools or universities of the prophets were still *Ramah* and *Gibeath*,

*Gibeath*, high places: who knows not that on the hill of *Sion* stood the temple: I have looked up to the hills, saith the Psalmist; and idolatry, in imitation, had their hill altars; on the mount of *Olives* was Christ wont to send up his prayers, and sent up himself; and here *Luke* saith, he went up to an high hill to pray; not for that God makes difference of places, to whose immensity, heaven itself is a valley; it was an heathenish conceit of those *Aramites*, that God is, the God of the mountains: but, because we are commonly more disposed to good by either the freedom of our scope to heaven, or the awfulness, or solitary silence of places, which (as one saith) strikes a kind of adoration into us: or by our local removal from this attractive body of the earth; howsoever, when the body sees itself above the earth; the eye of the mind is more easily raised to her heaven: It is good to take all advantage of place (setting aside superstition) to further our devotion: *Aaron* and *Hur* were in the mountain with *Moses*, and held up his hands: *Aaron* (say some allegorists) is mountainous; *Hur*, fiery: heavenly meditation, and the fire of charity must lift up our prayers to God. As *Satan* carried up Christ to an high hill to tempt him, so he carries up himself to be freed from temptation and distraction: if ever we would be transfigured in our dispositions, we must leave the earth below, and abandon all worldly thoughts. O come let us climb up to the hill, where God sees, or is seen, saith devout *Bernard*. O all ye cares, distractions, thoughtfulness, labours, pains, servitudes, stay me here with this ass, my body, till I with the boy, that is, my reason and understanding shall worship and return, saith the same father, wittily alluding to the journey of *Abraham* for his sacrifice.

Wherefore



Wherefore then did Christ climb up to this high hill? not to look about him, but, saith St. *Luke* to pray; not for prospect, but for devotion; that his thoughts might climb up yet nearer to heaven: behold how Christ entered upon all his great works, with prayers in his mouth: When he was to enter into that great work of his humiliation in his passion, he went into the garden to pray; when he is to enter into this great work of his exaltation, in his transfiguring, he went up into the mountain to pray; he was taken up from his knees, to both: O noble example of piety and devotion to us, he was God that prayed, the God that he prayed to, he might have commanded, yet he prayed, that we men might learn of him, to pray to him; what should we men dare to do without prayers, when he that was God, would do nothing without them? The very heathen poet, could say, a *Jove principium*: and which of those verse mongers ever durst write a ballad without imploring of some deity? Which of the heathens durst attempt any great enterprise without invocation and sacrifice? *Saul* himself, would play the priest, and offer a burnt offering to the Lord, rather than the *Philistians* should fight with him, unsupplicated, as thinking any devotion better than none: and thinking it more safe to sacrifice without a priest, than to fight without prayers: ungirt, unblest, was the old word, as not ready till they were girded, so not till they had prayed; and how dare we rush into the affairs of God, or the state? how dare we thrust ourselves into actions, either perilous, or important, without ever lifting up our eyes and hearts unto the God of heaven; except we would say (as the devilish malice of *Surius* flanders that zealous *Luther*,) this business was

was neither begun for God, nor shall be ended for him." How can God bless us if we implore him not? How can we prosper if he bless us not? How can we hope ever to be transfigured from a lump of corrupt flesh, if we do not ascend and pray, as the *Samaritan* woman said, weakly, we may seriously: the well of mercies is deep, if thou hast nothing to draw with, never look to taste of the waters of life: I fear the worst of men, *Turks*, and the worst *Turks*, the *Moors* shall rise up in judgment against many Christians, with whom it is a just exception, against any witness by their law, that he hath not prayed six times in each natural day: Before the day break they pray for day; when it is day they give God thanks for day; at noon they thank God for half the day past; after that they pray for a good sun-set; after that they thank God for the day passed, and lastly, pray for a good night after their day: and we Christians suffer so many Suns and Moons to rise and set upon our heads, and never lift up our hearts to their Creator and ours, either to ask his blessing, or to acknowledge it. Of all men under heaven, none had so much need to pray as courtiers; That which was done but once to Christ, is always done to them. They are set upon the hill, and see the glory of the kingdoms of the earth, but I fear it is seen of them, as it is with some of the mariners, the more need, the less devotion.

Ye have seen the place, see the attendants: he would not have many, because he would not have it yet known to all; hence was his intermination, and sealing up their mouths with *tell no man*: not none, because he would not have it altogether unknown: and afterwards would have it known to all: three were a legal number, in the mouth of two or three witnesses. He had eternally

nally possessed the glory of his father without any witnesses; in time, the angels were blessed with that sight; and after that, two bodily yet heavenly witnesses were allowed, *Enoch* and *Elias*; now in his humanity, he was invested with glory, he takes but three witnesses, and those earthly and weak, *Peter*, *James*, and *John*; and why these? We may be too curious: *Peter* because the eldest, *John* because the dearest, *James* because, next *Peter*, the zealous: *Peter* because he loved Christ most, *John* because Christ most loved him; *James* because next to both, he loved, and was loved most: I had rather to have no reason given, but, because it so pleased him. Why may we not as well ask, why he chose these twelve from others: as why he chose these three out of the twelve? If any *Romanists* will raise from hence any privilege to *Peter* (which we could be well content to yield, if that would make them ever the honestest men) they must remember that they must take company with them; which these pompeian spirits cannot abide: as good no privilege, as any partners; and withall, they must see him more taxed for his error, in this act, than honoured by his presence, at the act? whereas the beloved disciple saw and erred not; these same three, which were witnesses of his transfiguration in the mount, were witnesses of his agony in the garden; all three and these three alone, were present at both, but both times sleeping, these were the bell-wethers of the flock, as *Austin* calls them; O weak devotion of three great disciples; these were *Paul's* three pillars (οἱ ἑνὸς καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ) *Gal.* ii. 9. Christ takes them up twice, once to be witnesses of his greatest glory; once of his greatest extremity, they sleep both times; the other was in the night, more tolerable; this by day, yea in a light above day. *Chrysostom* would fain excuse

cuse it to be an amazedness, not a sleep; not considering that they slept both at that glory, and after in the agony. To see that master praying, one would have thought should have fetched them on their knees; especially to see those heavenly affections look out at his eyes; to see his soul lifted up in his hands, in that transported fashion to heaven; but now the hill hath wearied their limbs, their body clogs their soul, and they fall asleep; whilst Christ saw divine visions, they dreamed dreams; whilst he was in another world, ravished with the sight of his father's glory, yea of his own, they were in another world, a world of fancies, surprised with the cousin of death, sleep; besides so gracious an example, their own necessity, because I continually sin, *Bernard's* reason might have moved them to pray rather than their master; and, behold, instead of fixing their eyes upon heaven, they shut them; instead of lifting up their hearts, their heads fall down upon their shoulders; and shortly here was snorting instead of sighs and prayers; this was not *Abraham's* or *Elibu's* ecstatic sleep, *Job xxxiii.* not the sleep of the church, awaking sleep: but the plain sleep of the eyes; and that not a slumbering sleep, which *David* denies to himself, *Psal. cxxxii.* but a sound sleep, which *Solomon* forbids, *Prov. vi. 4.* yea rather the dead sleep of *Adam*, or *Jonas*. Prayer is an ordinary receipt for sleep; how prone are we to it, when we should mind divine things. *Adam* slept in paradise and lost a rib; but this sleep was of God's giving, and this rib was of God's taking. The good husband slept and sowed tares: *Eutichus* slept and fell; while *Satan* lulls us asleep (as he doth always rock the cradle, when we sleep in our devotions)



devotions) he ever takes some good from us, or put some evil in us, or indangers us a deadly fall; away with this spiritual lethargy; *Bernard* had wont to say, that those which sleep are dead to men, those that are dead, are asleep to God; but I say those that sleep at church, are dead to God, so we preach their funeral sermons instead of hortatory, and as he was wont to say, he lost no time so much at that wherein he slept, so let me add, there is no loss of time so desperate, as of holy time. Think that Christ saith to thee, at every sermon, as he did to *Peter*, sleepest thou, *Peter*? Could'st thou not wake with me one hour? A slumbring and a drowfy heart do not become the business, and presence of him that keepeth *Israel*, and slumbers not.

These were the attendants, see the companions of Christ; as our glory is not consummate without society, no more would Christ have his; therefore his transfiguration hath two companions, *Moses* and *Elias*; as *St. Paul* says of himself, whether in the body or out of the body, I know not, God knows; so say I of these two; of *Elijah* there may seem less doubt, since we know that his body was assumed to heaven, and might as well come down for Christ's glory, as go up for his own; although some grave authors, as *Calvin*, *Oecolampadius*, *Bala*, and *Fulke*, have held his body with *Enoch's*, resolved into their elements, *sed ego non credulus illis*; and for *Moses*, *Enoch translatus est in carne, et Elias carnis raptus est in cælum, &c.* *Enoch* was translated in the flesh, and *Elias* being yet in the flesh was taken into heaven, saith *Jerome* in his epistle ad *Pammachium*. Tho' it be rare and singular, and *Austin* makes much scruple of it; yet why might not he after death, return in his body, to the glory of Christ's  
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transfiguration, as well as afterwards many of the saints did to the glory of his resurrection? I cannot therefore with the gloss think, there is any reason why *Moses* should take another, a borrowed body, rather than his own: heaven could not give two fitter companions, more admirable to the *Jews* for their miracles, more gracious with God, for their faith and holiness; both of them admitted to the conference with God, in *Horeb*; both of them types of Christ; both of them fasted forty days; both of them for the glory of God suffered many perils; both divided the waters, both the messengers of God to Kings; both of them marvellous, as in their life, so in their end: a chariot of angels took away *Elias*, he was sought by the prophets, and not found; *Michael* strove with the devil for the body of *Moses*, he was sought for by the *Jews*, and not found; and now both of them are found here together on *Tabor*. This *Elias* shews himself to the royal prophet of his church; this *Moses* shews himself to the true *Michael*: *Moses* the publisher of the law, *Elias* the chief of the prophets, shew themselves to the God of the law and prophets; one the informer once of the people, the other the reformer sometimes, saith *Tertull. in 4 ad-ver. Marcionem*. One the first register of the Old Testament, the other the shutter up of the New. I verily think with *Hillary*, that these two are pointed at as the forerunners of the second coming of Christ, as now they were the foretellers of his departure; neither doubt I, that these are the two witnesses which are alluded to in the apocalypse; howsoever divers of the fathers have thrust *Enoch* into the place of *Moses*; look upon the place, *Apoc. xi. 5*. Who but *Elias* can be he, of whom it is said, if any man will hurt him, fire proceedeth out  
† of

of his mouth and devoureth his enemies, alluding to 2 *Kings* i. ? Who but *Elias* of whom it is said, he hath power to shut the heaven, that it rain not in the days of his prophecyng; alluding to 1 *Kings* viii. ? Who but *Moses*, of whom it is said, he hath power to turn the waters into blood, and smite the earth with all manner of plagues, alluding to *Exod.* vii. and viii. ? but take me aright; let me not seem a friend to the publicans of *Rome*, an abettor of those alcoran-like fables of our popish doctors, who (not seeing the wood for trees) do stick in the bark; taking all concerning that Antichrist, according to the letter, *odi & arceo*. So shall *Moses* and *Elias* come again in those witnesses, as *Elias* is already come in *John Baptist*: their spirits shall be in these witnesses, whose bodies and spirits were witnesses both of the present glory, and future passion of Christ. Doubtless, many thousand angels saw this sight, and were not seen, these two both saw, and were seen. O how great an happiness was it for these two great prophets; in their glorified flesh to see their glorified Saviour, who before his incarnation had spoken to them ? To speak to that man of God of whom they were glorified, and to become prophets not to men, but to God ? and if *Moses's* face so shone before, when he spoke to him without a body in *Mount Sinai*, in the midst of the flames and clouds, how did it shine now, when himself glorified speaks to him, a man in *Tabor*, in light and majesty ? *Elias* hid his face before with a mantle when he passed by him in the rock; now, with open face he beholds him present, and in his own glory adores his: let that impudent *Marcian*, who ascribes the law and prophets to another God, and devises an hostility betwixt Christ and them, be ashamed to see *Moses* and *Elias* not only

only in conference, but in partnership of brightness, (as *Tertull.* speaks) with Christ, whom if he had disliked, he had his choice of all the choir of heaven; and now chusing them, why were they not in rags and darkness; so doth he shew them far from strangeness to him, whom he hath with him; so doth he teach them to be forsaken, whom he joyns with himself; so doth he destroy those whom he graces with his beams of glory, saith that father. His act verifies his word, *I think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill them, Mat. v. 17.* O what consolation, what confirmation was this to the disciples, to see such examples of their future glory? such witnesses and adorers of the eternal deity of their master? they saw in *Moses* and *Elias* what they themselves should be, how could they ever fear to be miserable, that saw such precedents of their insuing glory; how could they fear to die, that saw in others the happiness of their own change? The rich glutton pleads with *Abraham*, that if one came to them from the dead, they will amend; *Abraham* answers, they have *Moses* and the prophets, let them hear them: behold, here is both *Moses* and the prophets, and these too come from the dead; how can we now but be perswaded of the happy state of another world, unless we will make ourselves worse than the damned? See and consider that the saints of God are not lost, but departed; gone into a far country with their master, to return again, richer and better than they went. Lest we should think this the condition of *Elias* only, that was rapt into heaven; see here, *Moses* matched with him, that died, and was buried; and is this the state of these two saints alone? Shall none be seen with him in the



the *Taber* of heaven, but those which have seen him in *Horeb* and *Carmel*? O thou weak Christian, was only one or two limbs of Christ's body glorious in the transfiguration, or the whole? he is the head, we are the members. If *Moses* and *Elias* were more excellent parts, tongue, or hand, let us be but heels, or toes, his body is not perfect in glory without ours; when Christ which is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory, *Colos. iii. 4.* How truly may we say to death, rejoice not mine enemy, though I fall, yet shall I rise, yea I shall rise in falling; we shall not all sleep, we shall be changed, *St. Paul* to his *Thessalonians*; *Elias* was changed, *Moses* slept, both appeared, to teach us, that neither our sleep nor change can keep us from appearing with him; when therefore thou shalt receive the sentence of death on *Mount Nebo*; or when the fiery chariot shall come and sweep thee from this vale of mortality, remember thy glorious re-appearance with thy Saviour, and thou canst not but be comforted, and chearfully triumph over that last enemy, outfacing those terrors with the assurance of a blessed resurrection to glory: To the which, &c.



CHRIST Transfigured. PART II.

IT falls out with this discourse as with *Mount* *Taber* itself, that it is more easily climbed with the eye than with the foot; if we may not rather say of it as *Josephus* did of *Sinai*, that it doth not only

only *ascensus hominum*, but *aspectus fatigare*, weary not only the steps but the very sight of men ; we had thought not to spend many breaths in the skirts of the hill, the circumstances, and it hath cost us one hour's journey already, and we were glad to rest us, ere we can have left them below us ; one pause more (I hope) will overcome them, and set us on the top : no circumstance remains undiscussed but this one, what *Moses* and *Elias* did with Christ in their apparition, for they were not as some sleepy attendants (like the three disciples in the beginning) to be there, and see nothing ; nor as some silent spectators, mute witnesses, to see and say nothing ; but (as if their glory had no whit changed their profession) they are prophets still, and foretold his departure, as St. *Luke* tells us, foretold not to him which knew it before, yea which told it them, they could not have known it but from him ; he was *o logos*, the word of his father ; they told but that which he before had told his disciples, and now these heavenly witnesses tell it over again for confirmation, like as *John Baptist* knew Christ before ; he was the voice of a cryer ; the other the word of his father ; there is great affinity betwixt voice and word ; yea this voice had uttered itself clearly, behold the Lamb of God ; yet he sends his disciples with an *Art thou he ?* that he might confirm to them by him, that, which he both knew and had said of him ; so our Saviour follows his forerunner in this, that what he knew, and had told his disciples, the other *Elias*, the typical *John Baptist*, and *Moses* must make good to their belief.

This departure of Christ was a word, both hard and harsh ; hard to believe, and harsh in believing ; the disciples thought of nothing but a kingdom ; a kingdom restored magnificently, interminably ;

terminably; and two of these three witnesses had so swallowed this hope, that they had put in for places in the state, to be his chief Peers: how could they think of a parting? The throne of *David* did so fill their eyes, that they could not see his cross; and if they must let down this pill, how bitter must it needs be? his presence was their joy and life, it was their death to think of his loss: now therefore, that they might see that his sufferings and death were not of any sudden impotence, but predetermined in heaven, and revealed to the saints; two of the most noted saints in heaven shall second the news of his departure, and that in the midst of his transfiguration; that they could not chuse but think, he that can be thus happy, needs not be miserable; that passion which he will undergo, is not out of weakness, but out of love. It is wittily noted by that sweet *Chrysostom*, that Christ never lightly spake of his passion, but immediately before and after he did some great miracle. And here, answerably, in the midst of his miraculous transfiguration, the two saints speak of his passion; a strange opportunity, in his highest exaltation to speak of his sufferings, to talk of *Calvary* in *Taber*; when his head shone with glory, to tell him how it must bleed with thorns; when his face shone like the sun, to tell him it must be defiled and spat upon; when his garments glistered with that celestial brightness, to tell him they must be stripped and divided; when he was adored by the saints of heaven, to tell him how he must be scorned by the basest of men; when he was seen between two saints, to tell him how he must be seen between two malefactors: in a word, in the midst of his divine majesty, to tell him of his shame; and whilst he was transfigured in the Mount, to tell him how he must

must be disfigured upon the Cross ; yet these two heavenly prophets found this the fittest time for this discourse ; rather chusing to speak of his sufferings in the height of his glory, than of his glory after his sufferings. It is most seasonable in our best to think of our worst estate ; for, both that thought will be best digested when we are well, and that change will be best prepared for, when we are the furthest from it : you would perhaps think it unseasonable for me, in the midst of all your court-jollity, to tell you of the days of mourning, and with that great King to serve in a death's head amongst your royal dishes, to shew your coffins in the midst of your triumphs ; yet these precedents above exception, show me that no time is so fit as this. Let me therefore say to you, with the plasmist, *I have said, ye are Gods* ; if ye were transfigured in *Tabor*, could ye be more ? but ye shall die like men ; there is your (*isidorus*) departure. It was a worthy and witty note of *Jerom*, that amongst all trees, the cedars are bidden to praise God, which are the tallest : and yet *the day of the Lord is upon all the cedars of Lebanon. Isai. ii.* ye gallants, whom a little yellow earth, and the webs of that curious worm have made gorgeous without, and perhaps proud within remember that ere long, as one worm decks you without, so another worm shall consume you within, and that both the earth that you pranced up, and that earth wherewith you pranced it, is running back into dust. Let not your high estate hide from you your fatal humiliation ; let not your purples hide from you your winding sheet ; but even on the top of *Tabor* think of the depth of the grave ; think of your departure from men, while ye are advanced above men.

We are now ascended to the top of the hill, let us therefore stand, and see, and wonder at this



great sight, as *Moses* to see the bush flaming and not consumed ; so we to see the humanity continuing itself in the midst of these beams of glory. Christ was, saith St. *Paul*, in the form of a servant : now, for the time he was truly transformed ; that there is no cause why *Maldonat* should so enveigh against some of ours, yea of his own, as *Jansenius*, who translates it *transformation* ; for what is the external form but the figure ; and their own Vulgar (as hotly as he takes it) reads it *Philip ii. 7.* (μορφή δούλου) *formam servi accipiens* ; there is do danger in this ambiguity not the substantial form, but the external fashion of Christ was changed ; he having three forms (as *Bernard* distinguishes) *contemptam*, *splendidam*, *divinam*, contemned, splendid, divine, changeth here the first into the second : this is one of the rarest occurrences that ever befell the Saviour of the world : I am wont to reckon up these four principal wonders of his life ; incarnation, temptation, transfiguration, and agony ; the first in the womb of the Virgin, the second in the Wilderness, the third in the Mount, and the fourth in the Garden the first, that God should become man ; the second that God and man should be tempted, and ransported by Satan ; the third, that man should be glorified upon earth ; the last, that he which was man and God should sweat blood under the sense of God's wrath for man ; and all these either had the angels for witnesses, or the immediate voice of God : the first had angels singing, the second angels ministring, the third the voice of God thundering, the fourth the angels comforting ; that it may be no wonder, the earth marvels at those things, whereat the angels of heaven stand amazed. *Bernard* makes three kinds of wonderful changes ; height to lowliness, when the word took flesh ; when Christ transformed himself before his disciples ;

ples ; when he rose again, and ascended to heaven to reign for ever ; ye see this is one of them ; and as *Taber* did rise out of the valley of *Galilee*, so this exaltation did rise out of the midst of Christ's humiliation. Other marvels do increase his dejection, this only makes for his glory, and the glory of this is matchable with the humiliation of all the rest ; that face wherein before (saith *Esaie*) there was no form nor beauty, now shines as the sun ; that face which men hid their faces from in contempt, now shines so, that mortal eyes could not chuse but hide themselves from the lustre of it, and immortal receive their beams from it : he had ever, as *Jerom* speaks, a certain heavenly majesty and port in his countenance, which made his disciples follow him at first sight ; but now, here was the perfection of supercelestial brightness : it was a miracle in the three children that they so were delivered from the flames, that their very garments smelt not of the fire ; it is no less miracle in Christ, that his very garments were dyed celestial, and did savour of his glory : like as *Aaron* was so anointed on his head and beard, that his skirts were all perfumed, his cloaths therefore shined as snow, yea (that were but a waterish white) as the light itself, saith *St. Mark* and *Matthew*, in the most *Greek* copies : that seamless coat, as it had no welt, so it had no spot. The King's son is all fair, even without. O excellent glory of his humanity : the best diamond or carbuncle is hid with a case, but this brightness peirceth through all his garments, and makes them lightsome in him. which use to conceal light in others : *Herod* put him on in mockage, *Luke* xxiii. not a white, but a bright robe (the ignorance whereof makes a shew of disparity in the evangelists) but God the father to glorify him,

cloaths

cloaths his very garments with heavenly splendor : behold thou art fair (my beloved,) behold thou art fair, and there is no spot in thee. Thine head is as fine gold, thy mouth is as sweet things, and thou art wholly delectable : come forth ye daughters of *Sion*, and behold King *Solomon* with the crown, wherewith his father crowned him in the day of the gladness of his heart. O Saviour, if thou wert such in *Tabor*, what are thou in heaven ? If this were the glory of thy humanity, what is the presence of thy Godhead ? Let no man yet wrong himself so much, as to magnify this happiness as another's, and to put himself out of the participation of this glory ; Christ is our head, we are his members ; so are we in the second *Adam*, both shining in *Tabor*, and bleeding sweat in the garden : and as we are already happy in him, so shall we be once in ourselves by and through him. He shall change our vile bodies, that they may be like his glorious body : behold our pattern, and rejoice ; *like his glorious body*. These very bodies that are now cloddy like the earth, shall once be bright as the sun. And we, that now see clay in one another's faces, shall then see nothing but heaven in our countenances ; and we that now set forth our bodies with cloaths, shall then be cloathed upon with immortality, out of the wardrobe of heaven ; and if ever any painted face should be admitted to the sight of this glory, (as I much fear it, yea, I am sure, God will have none but true faces in heaven,) they would be ashamed to think that ever they had faces to daub with these beastly pigments, in comparison of this heavenly complexion. Let us therefore look upon this flesh, not so much with contempt of what it was, and is, as with a joyful hope of what it shall be ; and when our courage is assaulted with the change of these bodies from healthful to weak, from

living to dead, let us comfort ourselves with the assurance of this change, from dust to incorruption : we are not so sure of death, as of transfiguration : all the days of our appointed time we will therefore wait, till our changing shall come.

Now from the glory of the master, give me leave to turn your eyes to the error of the servant ; who having slept with the rest, and now suddenly awaking, knoweth not whether he slept still. To see such a light about him, three so glittering persons before him, made him doubt, now, as he did after, when he was carried by the angel through the iron gate, whether it were a pleasing dream, or a real act : all slept, and now all waked, only *Peter* slept waking, and I know not whether more erred in his speech, or in his sleep. It was a shame for a man to sleep in *Tabor*, but it is a more shame for a man to dream with his eyes open : thus did *Peter*, *Master*, it is good for us to be here. Let us make us three tabernacles. I could well say with *Optatus* in this, or any other occasion, let blessed *Peter* pardon me, I fear to say so great holiness offended. Yet since our adversaries are so over partial to this worthy saint, in whom they have as little, as they boast much ; that they can be content his praise should blemish the dignity of all the rest ; yea that God himself is in danger to be a looser by the advancement of so dear a servant ; give me leave to lay my finger a little upon this blot. God would never have recorded that which it should be uncharitable for us to observe ; it was the injurious kindness of *Marcion* in honour of *Peter*, to leave out the story of *Malchus*, as *Epiphanius* notes ; it shall be our blame, if we do not so note, that we benefit ourselves even by his imperfections. St. *Mark's* Gospel is said to be *Peter's*, O blessed Apostle, can it be any wrong to say of thee, that which thou hast written of thyself ; not  
for



for insultation, nor for exprobatation, God forbid ! but that men may be ashamed to give that to him which he hath denied to himself : let me therefore not doubt to say (with reverence to so great a Saint) that as he spake most, so he is noted to have erred most : not to meddle with his sinking, striking, Judaizing ; one while we find him carnally insinuating, another while, carnally presuming ; one while weakly denying, another while rashly misconstruing ; *carnally insinuating ; Master favour thyself*, which though some parasites of Rome would fain smooth up, that he in this shewed his love to Christ, as before his faith, out of St. *Jerom* and St. *Austin* ; yet it must needs be granted, which *Bernard* saith, he loved the spirit in a carnal fashion : let them chuse whether they will admit Christ to have chid unjustly, or *Peter* worthy of chiding ; except perhaps, with *Hillary*, they will stop where they should not ; *vade post me, get thee behind me*, spoken to *Peter*, in approbation : *Satana, non sapis quæ Dei sunt*, *Satan*, thou savourest not the things of God, spoken to *Satan* in objurgation.

Carnally presuming (*though all men yet not I*,) if he had not presumed of his strength to stand, he had not fallen : and as one yawning makes many open mouths, so did his vain resolution draw on company (*likewise said the other disciples*.) For his weak denial ye all know his simple negation, lined with an oath, faced with an imprecation ; and here, that no man may need to doubt of an error, the spirit of God saith, he knew not what he said ; not only as *Mark*, what he should say ; but saith *Luke*, what he did speak, whereof St. *Mark* gives the reason *they were amazedly affrighted*. Amazedness may abate an error of speech, it cannot take it away ; besides astonishment, here was a fervor of spirit ; a love to Christ's glory, and a delight in it ; a fire but misplaced on the top of the chimney, not on the

the hearth ; as *Ambrose* speaks, a devotion, but rash and heady, and, if it had not been so, yet it is not in the power of a good intention to make a speech good ; in this the matter failed ; for what should such saints do in earthly tabernacles, in tabernacles of his making ? And, if he could be content to live there without a tent (for he would have but three made) why did he not much more conceive so of those heavenly guests ? And if he spoke this to retain them, how weak was it to think, their absence would be for want of house-room ? Or, how could that at once be, which *Moses* and *Elias* had told him, and that which he wished ? For how should Christ both depart at *Jerusalem*, and stay in the mount ? Or if he would have their abode there, to avoid the sufferings at *Jerusalem*, how did he yet again sing over that song, for which he had heard before, *Come behind me, Satan* ? Or if it had been fit for Christ, to have stayed there, how weakly doth he (which *Cbrysostom* observes) equalize the servant with the master, the Saints with God ? In a word, the best and the worst that can be said here of *Peter*, is, that which the Psalmist saith of *Moses*, *he speak unwisely with his lips. Psal. cvi. 33.*

Yet if any earthly place, or condition might have given warrant to *Peter's* motion, this was it : here was a hill, the emblem of heaven ; here was two Saints the epitome of heaven ; here was Christ the God of heaven : and if *Peter* might not say so of this, how shall we say of any other place, *It is good to be here.* Will ye say of the country, *It is good to be here* ? There is melancholy, dulness, privacy, toil. Will you say of the court, *It is good to be here* ? There dwells ambition, secret undermining, attendance, serving of humours and times. Will you say of the city, *It is good to be here* ? There you find continual tumult, usury, couzenage in bargains,

gains, excess and disorder. Get you to the wilderness, and say, *It is good to be here*; even there evils will find us out, saith Bernard, in the wood dwells the wolf; weariness and sorrow dwell every where. The rich man wallows amongst his heaps, and when he is in his counting-house, beset with piles of bags, he can say, *It is good to be here*: he worships these molten images; his gold is his god, his heaven is his chest: not thinking of that, which Tertullian notes, That some countries make their very fetters of gold: yea so doth he, whilst he admires it, making himself the slave to his servant, *Damnatus ad metalla*, as the old Roman punishment was: forced bondage is more worthy of pity, affected bondage is more miserable. And if God's hand touch him never so little, can his gold bribe a disease, can his bags keep his head from aking, or the gout from his joints: or doth his loathing stomach make a difference betwixt an earthen and silver dish? O vain desires, and impotent contentments of men, who place happiness in that, which doth not only not serve them from evils, but help to make them miserable. Behold their wealth feeds them with famine; recreates them with toil; cheers them with cares, blesses them with torments; and yet they say, *It is good to be here*; how are their sleeps broken with cares? How are their hearts broken with losses? either riches have wings, which in the clipping or pulling fly away, and take them to heaven: or else their souls have wings (*Thou fool this night*) and fly from their riches to hell, Seneca saith, not the Lord, but the farmer. So that here are both perishing riches, and a perishing soul. Uncertainty of riches (as St. Paul to his Timothy) and certainty of misery: and yet these vain men say, *It is good to be here*.

The man of honour (that I may use Bernard's phrase) that hath *Assuerus* his proclamation made

before

before him, which knows he is not only a certain great man, as *Simon* affected; but the man, which *Demosthenes* was proud of, that sees all heads bare, and all knees bent to him; that finds himself out of the reach of envy, on the pitch of admiration, says, *It is good to be here.* Alas, how little thinks he of that, which that good man said to his *Eugenius*, What care we for the fawning of that greatness, which is attended with more care? King *Henry* the seventh's emblem in all his buildings (in the windows) was still a crown in a bush of thorns; I know not with what historical allusion; but sure, I think, to imply that great places are not free from great cares: *Saul* knew what he did, when he hid himself among the stuff: no man knoweth the weight of a scepter, but he that swayeth it. As for subordinate greatness, it hath so much less worth, as it hath more dependance: how many sleepless nights, and restless days, and busy shifts doth their ambition cost them, that affect eminence? Certainly, no men are so worthy of pity, as they whose height thinks all other worthy of contempt. High places are slippery; and as it is easy to fall, so the ruin is deep, and the recovery difficult. *Bernard* saith, thou hast got an higher place, but not a safer; a loftier, but not more secure. *The slippery ridge of the court*, was the old title of honour. *David's* curse was, *let their way be made dark and slippery*; what difference is there betwixt his curse, and the happiness of the ambitious, but this; that the way of the one is dark and slippery; the way of the other lightsome and slippery: that dark that they may fall, this light that they may see, and be seen to fall. Please yourselves then, ye great ones, and let others please you in the admiration of your height. But if your goodness do not answer your greatness, it is a late complaint, thou hast lift me up to cast me



me down. Your ambition hath but set you up a scaffold, that your misery might be more notorious, and yet these clients of honour say, *It is good to be here.*

The pampered glutton, when he seeth his table spread with full bowls, with costly dishes, and curious fauces, the dainties of all three elements, says, *It is good to be here.* And yet, eating hath a satiety, and satiety a weariness: his heart is never more empty of contentment, than when his stomach is fullest of delicates. When he is empty, he is not well till he be filled; when he is full, he is not well till he have got a stomach; and in the end, condemns all the momentary pleasures of his marrow to the dunghill. And when he sits at his feasts of marrow, and fat things (as the prophet speaks,) his table according to the Psalmist's imprecation, is made his snare; a true snare every way: his soul is caught in it with excess; his estate, with penury; his body with diseases: neither doth he more plainly tear his meat in pieces with his teeth, than he doth himself; and yet this vain man says *It is good to be here.*

The petulant wanton thinks it the only happiness that he may have his full scope to filthy dalliance: little would he so do, if he could see his strumpet as she is, her eyes the eyes of a cockatrice, her hairs snakes, her painted face the visor of a fury, her heart snares, her hands bands, and her end wormwood: consumption of the flesh, destruction of the soul, and the flame of lust ending in the flames of hell: since therefore, neither pleasures, nor honour, nor wealth, can yield any true contentment to their best favourites, let us not be so unwise as to speak of this vale of misery, as *Peter* did of the hill of *Tabor*; *It is good to be here.*

And if the best of earth cannot do it, why will ye seek it in the worst? How dare any of you great ones seek to purchase contentment with oppression,

sacrilege, bribery? Out-facing innocence and truth with power? damning your own souls, for but the humouring of a few miserable days? *O ye Sons of men how long, &c.*

But that which moved *Peter's* desire (though with imperfection) shews what will perfect our desire, and felicity, for if a glimpse of this heavenly glory did so ravish this worthy disciple, that he thought it happiness enough, to stand by and gaze upon it; how shall we be affected with the contemplation, yea fruition of the divine presence; here was but *Tabor*, there is heaven; here were but two Saints, there many millions of Saints and angels; here was Christ transfigured, there he sits at the right hand of majesty; here was a representation, there a gift and possession of blessedness. O that we could now forget the world, and fixing our eyes upon this better *Tabor*, say, *It is good to be here.* Alas, this life of ours, if it were not short, yet it is miserable; and if it were not miserable, yet it is short. Tell me ye that have the greatest command on earth, whither this vile world have ever afforded you any sincere contentation: the world is your servant, if it were your parasite, yet could it make you heartily merry? Ye delicatest courtiers, tell me if pleasure itself have not an unpleasant tediousness hanging upon it, and more sting than honey? And whereas all happiness (even here below) is in the vision of God, how is our spiritual eye hindered, as the body is from his object, by darkness, by false light. by aversion? *Darkness*; he that doth sin, is in darkness: *false light*; whilst we measure eternal things by temporary: *aversion*, whilst as weak eyes hate the light, we turn our eyes from the true and immutable good, to the fickle and uncertain. We are not on the hill, but the valley, where we have tabernacles, not of our own making, but of clay; and such, as wherein we are witness

nesses of Christ, not transfigured in glory; but blemished with dishonour; dishonoured with oaths, and blasphemies: recrucified with our sins; witnessers of God's Saints, not shining in *Tabor*, but mourning in darkness; and instead of that heavenly brightness, clothed with sackcloth and ashes. Then and there, we shall have tabernacles, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where we shall see how sweet the Lord is; we shall see the triumphs of Christ; we shall hear and sing the *Hallelujahs* of Saints. O how hath our corruption bewitched us, to thirst for this worm wood, to affect the shipwrecks of this world, to dote upon the misery of this fading life, and not rather to fly up to the felicity of Saints, to the society of Angels, to that blessed contemplation, wherein we shall see God in himself, God in us, ourselves in him. There shall be no sorrow, no pain, no complaint, no fear, no death. There is no malice to rise against us, no misery to afflict us, no hunger, thirst, weariness, temptation to disquiet us. There, O there, one day is better than a thousand: there is rest from our labours, peace from our enemies, freedom from our sins: how many clouds of discontentment darken the sunshine of our joy, while we are here below? Complaint of evils past, sense of present, fear of future, have shared our lives amongst them; then shall we be always joyful, always satisfied with the vision of that God, in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. Shall we see that heathen *Cleombrotus* abandoning his life, and casting himself down from the rock, upon an uncertain noise of immortality, and shall not we Christians abandon the wicked superfluities of life, the pleasures of sin, for that life which we know more certainly than this? What stick we at, my





walks under a canopy, that veil shews there is a great person under it, but withal restrains the eye from a free sight of his person : and if the cloud were clear, yet it shaded them. Why then was this cloud interposed betwixt that glorious vision and them ; but for a check of their bold eyes ?

Had they too long gazed upon this resplendent spectacle, as their eyes had been blinded, so their hearts had perhaps grown to an over-bold familiarity with that heavenly object ; how seasonably doth the cloud intercept it ? The wise God knows our need of these vicissitudes, and allays ; if we have a light, we must have a cloud ; if a light to cheer us, we must have a cloud to humble us : it was so in *Sinai*, it was so in *Sion*, it was so in *Olivet* ; it shall never be but so. The natural day and night do not more duly interchange, than this light and cloud. Above, we shall have the light without the cloud, a clear vision and fruition of God, without all dim, and sad interpositions ; below, we cannot be free from these mists and clouds of sorrow, and misapprehension.

But this was a bright cloud ; there is difference betwixt the cloud in *Tabor*, and that in *Sinai* : this was clear, that darksome ; there is darkness in the law, there is light in the grace of the gospel : *Moses* was there spoken to in darkness ; here, he was spoken with, in light. In that dark cloud there was terror, in this, there was comfort ; though it were a cloud then, yet it was bright, yet it was a cloud : with much light, there was some shade : God would not speak to them concerning Christ, out of darkness : neither yet would he manifest himself to them, in an absolute brightness : all his appearances have this mixture. What need I other instance than these two Saints ? *Moses* spake oft to God, mouth to mouth ; yet not so immediately,  
but

but that there was ever somewhat drawn, as a curtain, betwixt God and him; either fire in *Horeb*, or smoak in *Sinai*; so as his face was not more veiled from the people, than God's from him: *Elias* shall be spoken to by God, but in the rock, and under a mantle: In vain shall we hope for any revelation from God, but in a cloud. Worldly hearts are in utter darkness, they see not so much as the least glimpse of these divine beams, not a beam of that inaccessible light: The best of his saints see him here, but in a cloud, or in a glass; happy are we, if God have honoured us with these divine representations of himself; once, in his light, we shall see light.

I can easily think with what amazedness these three Disciples stood compassed in that bright cloud, expecting some miraculous event, of so heavenly a vision; when suddenly they might hear a voice sounding out of that cloud saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear him.* They need not be told whose that voice was; the place, the matter evinced it; no angel in heaven, could, or durst have said so: How gladly doth *Peter* afterwards recount it; for he received from God the father honour and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved son, &c.*

It was only the ear that was here taught, not the eye; as of *Horeb*, so of *Sinai*, so of *Tabor*, might God say, ye saw no shape, nor image, in that day that the Lord spake unto you. He that knows our proneness to idolatry, avoids those occasions which we might take to abuse our own fancies.

Twice hath God spoken these words to his own Son from heaven; once in his baptism, and now again in his transfiguration: Here, not without some oppositive comparison; not *Moses*, not *Elias*, but *This*; *Moses* and *Elias* were servants, this a Son: *Moses* and *Elias* were sons, but of grace, and choice,

*This is that son*, the son by nature : Other sons are *beloved* as of favour, and free election ; this is, *the beloved*, as in the unity of his essence ; others are so beloved, that he is pleased with themselves, this, so beloved, that in and for him he is pleased with mankind. As the relation betwixt the Father and the son is infinite, so is the love : We measure the intension of love by the extention ; the love that rests in the person affected alone, is but strait ; true love descends (like *Aaron's ointment*) from the head to the skirts ; to children, friends, allies. O incomprehensible large love of God the father to the son, that for his sake he is pleased with the world. O perfect and happy complacence ! Out of Christ there is nothing but enmity betwixt God and the soul ; in him there can be nothing but peace ; when the beams are met in one center, they do not only heat, but burn ; our weak love is diffused to many ; God hath some, the world more ; and therein, wives, children, friends ; but this infinite love of God hath all the beams of it united in one only object, the son of his love : Neither doth he love any thing but in the participation of his love, in the derivation from it ; O God, let me be found in Christ, and how canst thou but be pleased with me ?

This one voice proclaims Christ at once the Son of God, the reconciler of the world, the Doctor and law-giver of his church ; as the son of God he is essentially interested in his love ; as he is the reconciler of the world in whom God is well pleased, he doth most justly challenge our love, and adherence ; as he is the doctor and law-giver ; he doth justly challenge our audience, our obedience ; even so, Lord teach us to hear and obey thee, as our teacher ; to love thee and believe in thee as our reconciler, and as the eternal son of thy Father, to adore thee.

The

The light caused wonder in the Disciples ; but the voice, astonishment, they are all fallen down upon their faces : Who can blame a mortal man to be thus affected with the voice of his maker ? yet this word was but plausible and hortatory ; O God, how shall flesh and blood be other than swallowed up with the horror of thy dreadful sentence of death ? The Lion shall roar, who shall not be afraid, how shall those that have slighted the sweet voice of thine invitations call to the rocks to hide them from the terror of thy Judgments ?

The God of mercies pities our infirmities ; I do not hear our Saviour say, ye lay sleeping one while upon the earth, now ye lie astonished ; ye could neither wake to see, nor stand to hear, now lie still and tremble. But he graciously touches and comforts them, *arise, fear not.* That voice which shall once raise them up out of the earth, might well raise them up from it ; that hand which by the least touch restored sight, limbs, and life, might well restore the spirits of the dismayed. O Saviour, let that sovereign hand of thine touch us, when we lye in the trances of our griefs, in the bed of our securities, in the grave of our sins, and we shall arise.

*They looking up saw no man save Jesus alone :* And that doubtless in his wonted form ; all was now gone, *Moses, Elias*, the cloud, the voice, the glory ; *Tabor* itself cannot be long blessed with that divine light ; and those shining guests ; Heaven will not allow to earth any long continuance of glory ; only above is constant happiness to be look'd for and enjoyed, where we shall ever see our Saviour in his unchangeable brightness ; where the light shall never be either clouded or varied.

*Moses* and *Elias* are gone, only Christ is left ; the glory of the law and the prophets was but temporary, yea momentary, that only Christ may remain to us  
intire,



intire, and conspicuous ; they came but to give testimony to Christ, when that is done, they are vanished.

Neither could these raised disciples find any miss of *Moses* and *Elias* ; when they had Christ still with them. Had Jesus been gone, and left either *Moses* or *Elias*, or both, in the mount with his Disciples ; that presence (though glorious) could not have comforted them ; now that they are gone, and he is left, they cannot be capable of discomfort : Oh Saviour, it matters not who is away whilst thou art with us ; Thou art God all-sufficient ; what can we want when we want not thee ? Thy presence shall make *Tabor* itself an heaven ; yea, hell itself cannot make us miserable with the fruition of thee.



XXIX. *The Woman taken in Adultery.*

JOHN viii. 1—11.

**W**HAT a busy life was this of Christ's ? He spent the night in the mount of *Olives*, the day in the temple ; whereas the night is for a retired repose, the day for company ; his retiredness was for prayer ; his society was for preaching ; all night he watches in the mount, all the morning he preaches in the temple ; it was not for pleasure that he was here upon earth ; his whole time was penal and toilsome ; how do we resemble him, if his life were all pain and labour, ours all pastime ? He found no such fair success the day before ; the multitude was divided in their opinion of him : Messengers were sent, and suborned to apprehend him ; yet he returns to the temple : It is for the sluggard, or the coward, to plead a Lion in the way ; upon the

the calling of God, we must overlook and condemn all the spite and opposition of men: Even after an ill harvest we must sow; and after denials we must woo for God.

The Sun of righteousness prevents that other, and shines early with wholesome doctrines upon the souls of his hearers; the auditory is both thronged, and attentive; yet not all with the same intentions; if the people came to learn, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* came to cavil and carp at his teaching, with what a pretence of zeal and justice, yet do they put themselves into Christ's presence? As lovers of chastity, and sanctimony, and haters of uncleanness, they bring to him a woman taken in the flagrance of her adultery. And why the woman rather? since the man's offence was equal, if not more; because he should have had more strength of resistance; more grace not to tempt. Was it out of necessity? perhaps, the man knowing his danger, made use of his strength to shift away, and violently brake from his apprehenders; or was it out of cunning? in that they hoped for more likely matter to accuse Christ, in the case of the woman, than of the man; for that they supposed his merciful disposition, might more probably incline to compassionate her weakness rather than the stronger vessel. Or was it rather out of partiality? was it not then, as now, that the weakest sooner suffers; and impotency lays us open to the malice of an enemy? Small flies hang in the webs, whilst wasps break through without controul; the wand, and the sheet are for poor offenders, the great either out-face or out-buy their shame: A beggarly drunkard is haled to the stocks, whilst the rich is chambered up to sleep out his surfeit.

Out of these grounds is the woman brought to Christ; not to the mount of *Olives*, not to the way, not to his private lodging, but to the temple; and that

that, not to some obscure angel, but into the face of the assembly.

They pleaded for her death; the punishment which they would onwards inflict, was her shame: which must needs be so much more, as there were more eyes to be witnesses of her guiltiness. All the brood of sin affects darkness and secrecy, but this more properly; the twilight; the night is for the adulterer; it cannot be better fitted than to be dragged out into the light of the Sun, and to be proclaimed with hootings. O the impudence of those men, who can make merry professions of their own beastliness; and boast of the shameful trophies of their lust!

Methinks I see this miserable Adulteress how she stands confounded amidst that gazing, and disdainful multitude; how she hides her head, how she wipes her blubbered face, and weeping eyes; in the mean time it is no dumb show that is here acted by these scribes and pharisees; they step forth boldly to her accusation; *Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act*; how plausible do they begin? Had I stood by and heard them, should I not have said; what holy, honest, conscionable men are these? What devout clients of Christ; with what reverence they come to him, with what zeal of justice? When he that made, and ransacks their bosom, tells me, *all this is done but to tempt him*; even the falsest hearts will have the plausiblest mouths; like to Solomon's courtesan; their lips drop as an honey comb, and their mouth is smoother than oil, but their end is bitter as wormwood.

False and hollow Pharisees, he is your master whom ye serve, not he whom ye tempt; only in this shall he be approved your master, that he shall pay your wages, and give you your portion with hypocrites.

The

The act of adultery was her crime ; to be taken in the very act, was no part of her sin, but the proof of her just conviction ; yet her deprehension is made an aggravation of her shame : such is the corrupt judgment of the world ; to do ill, troubles not men, but to be taken in doing it ; unknown filthiness passeth away with ease ; it is the notice that perplexes them, not the guilt. But, O foolish sinners, all your packing and secrecy cannot so contrive it, but that ye shall be taken in the manner ; your conscience takes you so ; the God of heaven takes you so, and ye shall once find, that your conscience is more than a thousand witnesses, and God more than a thousand consciences.

They that complain of the act, urge the punishment ; now *Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned* : where did *Moses* bid so ? Surely the particularity of this execution was without the book ; tradition and custom enacted it, not the law.

Indeed *Moses* commanded death to both the offenders, not the manner of death to either ; by analogy it holds thus : it is flatly commanded in the case of a damsel betrothed to an husband, and found not to be a virgin ; in the case of a damsel betrothed, who being defiled in the city, cried not ; tradition and custom made up the rest ; obtaining, out of this ground, that all adulterers should be executed by lapidation† ; the antienter punishment was burning ; death always ; though in divers forms. I shame to think that christians should slight that sin, which both *Jews* and *Pagans* held ever deadly.

What a mis-citation is this ? *Moses commanded*. The law was God's, not *Moses's* ; if *Moses* were employed to mediate betwixt God and *Israel* ; the law is never the more his ; he was the hand of God to reach the law to *Israel*, the hand of *Israel* to take it from God ; we do not name the water from

† Stoning.



from the pipes, but from the spring. It is not for a true *Israelite* to rest in the second means, but to mount up to the supreme original of justice; how reverent soever an opinion was had of *Moses*, he cannot be thus named without a shameful undervaluing of the royal law of his Maker; there is no mortal man whose authority may not grow into contempt, that of the everliving God cannot but be ever sacred, and inviolable. It is now with the gospel, as it was then with the law, the word is no other than Christ's, though delivered by our weakness; whosoever be the cryer, the proclamation is the King's of heaven; whilst it goes for ours, it is no marvel if it lye open to despight.

How captious a word is this, *Moses* said thus, what sayest thou? If they be not sure that *Moses* said so, why do they affirm it? And if they be sure, why do they question that, which they know decided? They would not have desired a better advantage, than a contradiction to that received lawgiver. It is their profession, *We are Moses's disciples, and we know that God spake to Moses*; it had been quarrel enough to oppose so known a prophet. Still I find it the drift of the enemies of truth to set Christ and *Moses* together by the ears; in the matter of the Sabbath, of circumcision, of marriage and divorce, of the use of the law, of justification by the law, of the sense and extent of the law, and where not? But they shall never be able to effect it; they two are fast and indissoluble friends, on both parts for ever? each speaks for other, each establishes the other; they are subordinate, they cannot be opposite; *Moses* faithful as a servant, Christ as a son. A faithful servant cannot be but officious to the son: the true use we make of *Moses*, is, to be our schoolmaster to teach us, to lead us unto Christ; the true use we make of Christ, is, to supply

ply *Moses*; by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of *Moses*: thus must we hold in with both, if we will have our part in either; so shall *Moses* bring us to Christ, and Christ to glory. Had these Pharisees out of simplicity, and desire of resolution, in a case of doubt, moved this question to our Saviour, it had been no less commendable, than now it is blame worthy.

O Saviour, whither should we have recourse but to thine oracle; thou art the word of the Father; the doctor of the church; whilst we hear from others, what say, Fathers? What say Councils; let them hear from us, what sayest thou?

But, here, it was far otherwise; they came not to learn, but to tempt; and to tempt that they might accuse; like their father the devil, who solicits to sin, that he may plead against us for yieldance; fain would these colloquing adversaries draw Christ to contradict *Moses*, that they might take advantage of his contradiction.

On the one side, they saw his readiness to tax the false glosses, which their presumptuous doctors had put upon the law; with an, *I say unto you*; on the other, they saw his inclination to mercy, and commiseration, in all his courses; so far as to neglect even some circumstances of the law; as to touch the leper, to heal on the Sabbath, to eat with known sinners, to dismiss an infamous (but penitent) offender, to select and countenance two noted publicans; and hereupon they might perhaps think that his compassion might draw him to cross this Mosaical institution.

What a crafty bait is here laid for our Saviour? Such as he cannot bite at, and not be taken; it seems to them impossible he should avoid a deep prejudice, either to his justice, or mercy. For thus they

they imagine; either Christ will second *Moses* in sentencing this woman to death; or else, he will cross *Moses* in dismissing her unpunished; if he command her to be stoned, he loses the honour of his clemency and mercy; if he appoint her dismissal, he loses the honour of his justice; indeed, strip him of either of these, and he can be no Saviour. O the cunning folly of vain men that hope to beguile wisdom itself.

Silence and neglect shall first confound those men, whom, after, his answer, will send away convicted; instead of opening his mouth, our Saviour bows his body; and instead of returning words from his lips, writes characters on the ground with his finger; O Saviour, I had rather silently wonder at thy gesture, then inquire curiously into the words thou wrotest, or the mysteries of thus writing; only herein, I see thou meantest to shew a disregard to these malicious, and busy cavillers; sometimes taciturnity and contempt are the best answers; thou that hast bidden us be wise as serpents, givest us this noble example of thy prudence. It was most safe that these tempters should be thus kept fasting with a silent disrespect, that their eagerness might justly draw upon them an ensuing shame.

The more unwillingness they saw in Christ to give his answer, the more pressive and importunate they were to draw it from him; now, as forced by their so zealous irritation, our Saviour rouseth up himself, and gives it them home, with a reprehensory, and stinging satisfaction; *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*; as if his very action had said; I was loath to have shamed you; and therefore could have been willing not to have heard your ill-meant motion; but since you will needs have it, and by your vehemence force my justice, I must tell you, there is not one of you,  
but

but is as faulty as she whom you accuse; there is no difference, but that your sin is smothered in secrecy, her's is brought forth into the light; ye had more need to make your own peace by an humble repentance, than to urge severity against another; I deny not but *Moses* hath justly from God imposed the penalty of death upon such hainous offences, but what then would become of you? If death be her due, yet not by those your unclean hands; your hearts know you are not honest enough to accuse.

Lo, not the bird, but the fowler is taken: He says not, let her be stoned, this had been against the course of his mercy; he says not, let her not be stoned; this had been against the law of *Moses*; now he so answers, that both his justice and mercy are entire, she dismissed, they ashamed.

It was the manner of the *Jews*, in those hainous crimes that were punished with lapidation, that the witnesses and accusers should be the first that should lay hands upon the guilty; well doth our Saviour, therefore, choak these accusers with the conscience of their so foul incompetency; with what face, with what heart, could they stone their own sin in another person?

Honesty is too mean a term; these Scribes and Pharisees were noted for extraordinary, and admired holiness; the outside of their lives was not only inoffensive, but Saint-like, and exemplary; yet that all-seeing eye of the Son of God, which found folly in the angels, hath much more found wickedness in these glorious professors; it is not for nothing that his eyes are like a flame of fire; what secret is there which he searches not? Retire yourselves, O ye foolish sinners, into your inmost closets, yea (if ye can) into the centre of the earth, his eye follows you, and observes all your carriages; no bolt, no bar, no darkness, can keep him out;

no



no thief was ever so impudent, as to steal in the very face of the judge ; O God, let me see myself seen by thee, and I shall not dare to offend.

Besides notice, here is exprobration ; these mens sins, as they had been secret, so they were forgotten ; it is long since they were done ; neither did they think to have heard any more news of them ; and now, when time and security had quite worn them out of thought, he that shall once be their judge, calls them to a back-reckoning.

One time, or other, shall that just God lay our sins in our dish ; and make us possess the sins of our youth ; *These things thou didst, and I kept silence, and thou thoughtest I was like unto thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee.* The penitent man's sin lies before him for his humiliation ; the impenitents, for his shame and confusion.

The act of sin is transient, not so the guilt ; that will stick by us and return upon us, either in the height of our security, or the depth of our misery, when we shall be least able to bear it ; how just may it be with God to take us at advantages, and then to lay his arrest upon us, when we are laid up upon a former suit?

It is but just there should be a requisition of innocence in them that prosecute the vices of others ; the offender is worthy of stoning, but who shall cast them ? How ill would they become hands as guilty as her own ? What do they but smite themselves, who punish their own offences in other men ? Nothing is more unjust or absurd, than for the beam to censure the mote ; the oven to upbraid the kiln ; it is a false and vagrant zeal that begins not first at home.

Well did our Saviour know how bitter and strong a pill he had given to these false justiciaries ; and

now

now he will take leasure to see how it wrought; whilst therefore he gives time to them to swallow it, and put it over, he returns to his old gesture of a seeming inadvertency. How sped the receipt?

I do not see any one of them stand out with Christ and plead his own innocency; and yet these men (which is very remarkable) placed the fulfilling or violation of the law, only, in the outward act; their hearts misgave them, that if they should have stood out in contestation with Christ, he would have utterly shamed them, by displaying their old and secret sins, and have so convinced them by undeniable circumstances, that they should never have clawed off the reproach: *And therefore when they heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, they went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last.*

There might seem to be some-kind of mannerly order in this guilty departure; not all at once, lest they should seem violently chased away by this charge of Christ; now their slinking away (one by one) may seem to carry a shew of a deliberate and voluntary discession; the eldest first, the ancients is fitter to give than take example; and the younger could think it no shame to follow the steps of a grave foreman.

Oh wonderful power of conscience, Man can no more stand out against it, than it can stand out against God; the almighty, whose substitute is set in our bosom, sets it on work to accuse; it is no denying when that says we are guilty; when that condemns us, in vain are we acquitted by the world; with what bravery did these hypocrites come to set upon Christ? With what triumph did they insult upon that guilty soul? Now they are thunder-struck with their own conscience; and drop away confounded; and well is he that can run away farthest from his own shame. No wicked man needs to seek out of himself for a judge, accuser, witness, or tormenter.

No

No sooner do these hypocrites hear of their sins from the mouth of Christ, than they are gone; had they been sincerely touched with a true remorse, they would have rather come to him upon their knees; and have said, Lord, we know, and find that thou knowest our secret sins; this argues thy divine omniscience; thou that art able to know our sins, art able to remit them; O pardon the iniquities of thy servants; thou that accusest us, do thou also acquit us: but now instead hereof, they turn their back upon their Saviour, and haste away.

An impenitent man cares not how little he have either of the presence of God, or of the mention of his sins. O fools, if ye could run away from God, it were somewhat; but whilst ye move in him, what do ye? whither go ye? ye may run from his mercy, ye cannot but run upon his judgment.

Christ is left alone; alone in respect of these complainants; not alone in respect of the multitude: There yet stands the mournful adulteress; she might have gone forth with them; no body constrained her stay; but that which sent them away, stayed her conscience; she knew her guiltiness was publicly accused, and durst not be by herself deny'd; as one that was therefore fastened there by her own guilty heart, she stirs not till she may receive a dismissal.

Our Saviour was not so busy in writing, but that he read the while, the guilt and absence of those accusers; he that knew what they had done, knew no less what they did, what they would do; yet, as if the matter had been strange to him, he lifts up himself, and says, *Woman, where are thy accusers?*

How well was this sinner, to be left there? Could she be in a safer place than before the Tribunal of a Saviour? Might she have chosen her refuge, whither should she rather have fled? O happy

we, if when we are convinced in ourselves of our sins, we can set ourselves before that judge, who is our surety, our advocate, our redeemer, our ransom, our peace.

Now, she stood doubtful betwixt hope and fear ; hope, in that she saw her accusers gone ; fear, in that she knew what she had deserved ; and now while she trembles in expectation of a sentence, she hears, *Woman, where are thy accusers ?*

Wherein our Saviour intends the satisfaction of all the hearers, of all the beholders ; that they might apprehend the guiltiness, and therefore the unsuitness of the accusers ; and might well see there was no warrantable ground of his further proceeding against her.

Two things are necessary for the execution of a malefactor ; evidence, sentence ; the one from witnesses, the other from the judge : Our Saviour asks for both : The accusation and proof must draw on the sentence ; the sentence must proceed upon the evidence of the proof, *Where are thy accusers, Hath no man condemned thee ?* Had sentence passed legally upon the adulterers, doubtless our Saviour would not have acquitted her ; for as he would not intrude upon other offices, so he would not cross or violate the justice done by others ; but now, finding the coast clear, he says, *Neither do I condemn thee.*

What Lord ? dost thou then show favour to foul offenders ? art thou rather pleased that gross sins should be blanced and sent away with a gentle connivancy ? far, far, be this from the perfection of thy justice ; he that hence argues adultery is not punishable by death, let him argue the unlawfulness of dividing of inheritances, because in the case of the two wrangling brethren, thou saidst, *Who made me a divider of inheritances.* Thou declinedst the office, thou didst not dislike the act, either of parting lands, or punishing offenders ; neither was here any  
absolution



absolution of the woman, from a sentence of death, but a dismissal of her from thy sentence ; which thou knewest not proper for thee to pronounce. Herein hadst thou respect to thy calling, and to the main purpose of thy coming into the world, which was neither to be an arbiter of civil causes, nor a judge of criminal, but a Saviour of mankind, not to destroy the body, but to save the soul ; and this was thy care in this miserable offender. *Go, and sin no more.* How much more doth it concern us to keep within the bounds of our vocation, and not to dare to trench upon the functions of others ? How can we ever enough magnify thy mercy, who takest no pleasure in the death of a sinner, who so camest to save, that thou challengest us of unkindness for being miserable, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel.*

But, O Son of God, though thou wouldest not then be a judge, yet thou wilt once be : Thou wouldest not in thy first coming judge the sins of men, thou wilt come to judge them in thy second. The time shall come when upon that just and glorious Tribunal thou shalt judge every man according to his works. That we may not one day hear thee say, *Go ye cursed,* let us now hear thee say, *Go, sin no more.*



XXX. *The THANKFUL PENITENT.*

LUKE vii. 36—50.

**O**NE while I find Christ invited by a Publican, now by a Pharisee ; wherever he went, he made better cheer than he found, in an happy exchange of spiritual repast for bodily.

Who knows not the Pharisees to have been the proud enemies of Christ ; men over-conceited of themselves, contemptuous of others ; severe in show, hypocrites indeed, strict sectaries, insolent justiciaries ; yet here, one of them invites Christ ; and that in good earnest ; the man was not (like his fellows)

captious, not ceremonious ; had he been of their stamp, the omission of washing the feet had been mortal ; no profession hath not yielded some good : *Nicodemus*, and *Gamaliel* were of the same strain ; neither is it for nothing, that the Evangelist having branded this sect for despising the counsel of God against themselves ; presently subjoins this history of *Simon* the Pharisee, as an exempt man ; O Saviour, thou canst find out good Pharisees, good Publicans, yea a good thief upon the cross ; and, that thou may'st find, thou canst make them so.

At the best, yet, he was a Pharisee, whose table thou here refusedst not ; so didst thou in wisdom and mercy attemper thyself, as to become all things to all men, that thou mightest win some. Thy harbenger was rough, as in cloaths, so in disposition ; professedly harsh and austere ; thy self wert mild and sociable ; so it was fit for both ; He was a preacher of penance, thou the author of comfort and salvation ; He made way for grace, thou gavest it ; thou hast bidden us to follow thyself, not thy fore-runner : that, then, which politicks, and time-servers do for earthly advantages, we will do for spiritual ; frame ourselves to all companies, not in evil, but in good ; yea in indifferent things : What wonder is it that thou, who camest down from Heaven to frame thyself to our nature, shouldst, whilst thou wert on earth, frame thyself to the several dispositions of men. Catch not at this, O ye licentious hypocrites, men of all hours, that can eat with gluttons, drink with drunkards, sing with ribalds, scoff with profane scorners, and yet talk holily with the religious, as if ye had hence any colour for your changeable conformity to all fashions. Our Saviour never sinn'd for any man's sake, though for our sakes he was sociable, that he might keep us from sinning : Can ye so converse with lewd goodfellows, as that ye repress their sins, redress their exorbitances, win them to God ?—  
then

then ye walk in the steps of him that stuck not to sit down in the Pharisee's house.

There sat the Saviour, and, behold, a woman in the city that was a sinner: I marvel not that she is led in with a note of wonder; wonder, both on her part, and on Christ's; that any sinner, that a sensual sinner obdured in a notorious trade of evil, should voluntarily out of a true remorse for her lewdness, seek to a Saviour, it is worthy of an accent of admiration; the noise of the gospel is common; but where is the power of it? It hath store of hearers, but few converts: Yet were there no wonder in her, if it were not with reference to the power and mercy of Christ; his power that thus drew the sinner, his mercy that received her; O Saviour, I wonder at her, but I bless thee for her; by whose only grace she was both moved, and accepted.

*A sinner?* Alas, who was not? who is not so? not only in many things we sin all; but in all things, we all let fall many sins; had there been a woman not a sinner, it had been beyond wonder: One man there was that was not a sinner; even he that was more than man, that God and man, who was the refuge of this sinner; but never woman that sinned not; yet, he said not, a woman that had sinned, but that was a sinner; an action doth not give denomination, but a trade; even the wise charity of christians (much more the mercy of God) can distinguish between sins of infirmity, and practice of sin; and esteem us, not, by a transient act, but by a permanent condition.

The woman was noted for a luxurious, and incontinent life; what a deal of variety there is of sins? That which faileth cannot be numbered. Every sin continued deserves to brand the soul with this style; here, one is pickt out from the rest; she is not noted for murder, for theft, for idolatry; only her lust makes her a woman that was a sinner; other vices

use not to give the owner this title, although they should be more hainous than it.

Wantons may flatter themselves in the indifferency, or slightness of this offence; their souls shall need no other conveyance to hell than this; which cannot be so pleasing to nature as it is hateful to God, who so speaks of it as if there were no sins, but it, *a woman that was a sinner.*

She was a sinner, now she is not; her very presence argues her change; had she been still in her old trade, she would no more have indured the sight of Christ, than the devil did, which cryed out, *Art thou come to torment me?* Her eyes had been lamps, and fires of lust, not fountains of tears; her hairs had been nets to catch foolish lovers, not a towel for her Saviour's feet; yet still she carries the name of what she was; a scar still remains after the wound healed: *Simon* will be ever the leper, and *Matthew* the publican; How carefully should we avoid those actions which may ever stain us?

What a difference there is betwixt the carriage and proceedings of God and men? the mercy of God, as it calleth those things that are not, as if they were, so it calleth those things that were, as if they were not, *I will remember your iniquities no more*; as some skilful surgeon so sets the bone, or heals the sore, that it cannot be seen where the complaint was: Man's word is, that which is done cannot be undone; but the omnipotent goodness of God doth (as it were) undo our once-committed sins; *Take away my iniquity, and thou shalt find none*: what we were in our selves, we are not to him, since he hath changed us from ourselves.

O God why should we be niggardly where thou art liberal? why should we be reading those lines, which thou hast not only crossed, but quite blotted, yea wiped out.



It is a good word, *she was a sinner*; to be wicked is odious to God, Angels, Saints, men; to have been so, is blessed, and glorious; I rejoice to look back, and see my *Ægyptians* lying dead upon the shore, that I may praise the author of my deliverance and victory; else, it matters not what they were, what I was; O God, thou whose title is, I am, regardest the present; he befriends and honours us that says, such ye were, but ye are washed.

The place adds to the heinousness of the sin: *In the City*: The more publick the fact is, the greater is the scandal: sin is sin, though in a desert; others eyes do not make the act more vile in itself; but the offence is multiplied by the number of beholders.

I hear no name of either, the city, or the woman, *she was too well known in her time*; how much better is it to be obscure than infamous? herein, I doubt not, God meant to spare the reputation of a penitent convert; he who hates not the person, but the sin, cares only to mention the sin, not the person; it is justice to prosecute the vice, it is mercy to spare the offender. How injurious a presumption is it for any man to name her, whom God would have concealed? and to cast this aspersion on those, whom God hath noted for holiness?

The worst of this woman is past, *She was a sinner*, the best is to come; *She sought out Jesus*, Where? In the house of a Pharisee. It was the most inconvenient place in the world, for a noted sinner to seek Christ in.

No man stood so much upon the terms of their own righteousness; no men so scornfully disdained an infamous person; the touch of an ordinary (though honest) Jew was their pollution; how much more the presence of a strumpet? what a sight was a known sinner to him, to whom his holiest neighbour was a sinner? How doth he (though a better Pharisee)



look awry to see such a piece in his house, while he dares think, *If this man were a Prophet, he would surely know what manner of woman this is* ; Neither could she before imagine less, when she ventured to press over the threshold of a Pharisee ; yet, not the known austerity of the man, and her mis-welcome to the place, could affright her from seeking her Saviour, even there : No disadvantage can defer the penitent soul from a speedy recourse to Christ. She says not ; If Jesus were in the street, or in the field, or in the house of some humble Publican, or any where, save with a Pharisee, I would come to him ; now, I will rather defer my access, than seek him where I shall find scorn and censure ; but, as not fearing the frowns of that overly host, she thrusts herself into *Simon's* house to find Jesus. It is not for the distressed to be bashful ; it is not for the believer to be timorous : O Saviour if thy spouse miss thee ; she will seek thee through the streets ; the blows of the watch shall not daunt her ; if thou be on the other side of the water, a *Peter* will leap into the sea, and swim to thee ; if on the other side of the fire, thy blessed Martyrs will run through those flames to thee ; we are not worthy of the comfort of thy presence, if wheresoever we know thou art, whether in prison, or in exile, or at the stake, we do not hasten thither to enjoy thee.

The place was not more unfit than the time ; a Pharisee's house was not more improper for a sinner, than a feast was for humiliation ; tears at a banquet are as jigs at a funeral. There is a season for all things ; musick had been more apt for a feast than mourning.

The heart that hath once felt the sting of sin, and the sweetness of remission, hath no power to delay the expressions of what it feels, and cannot be confined to terms of circumstance.

Whence

Whence then was this zeal of her access? Doubtless, she had heard from the mouth of Christ, in those heavenly sermons of his, many gracious invitations to all troubled and labouring souls; she had observed how he vouchsafed to come under the roofs of despised Publicans, of professed enemies; she had noted all the passages of his power and mercy; and now, deep remorse wrought upon her heart for her former viciousness: The pool of her conscience was troubled by the descending angel, and now she steps in for a cure. The arrow stuck fast in her soul, which she could not shake out; and now she comes to this sovereign dittany to expel it. Had not the spirit of God wrought upon her, ere she came, and wrought her to come, she had never either sought, or found Christ. Now she comes in, and finds that Saviour whom she sought; she comes in, but not empty handed: Though debauched, she was a Jewess. She could not but have heard that she ought not to appear before the Lord empty: What then brings she? It was not possible she could bring to Christ a better present than her own penitent soul; yet, to testify that, she brings another; delicate both for the vessel, and the contents: *A box of Alabaſter*; a solid, hard, pure, clear marble, fit for the receipt of so precious an ointment; The ointment pleasant and costly; a composition of many fragrant odours; not for medicine, but delight.

The soul that is truly touched with the sense of its own sin, can think nothing too good, too dear for Christ: The remorseful sinner begins first with the tender of burnt offerings, and calves of a year old; thence he ascends to hecatombs; thousands of rams; and above that yet, to ten thousand rivers of oil; and, yet higher, could be content to give the first fruit of his body to expiate the sin of his soul: Any thing, every thing is too small a price for peace. Oh Saviour, since we have tasted how sweet thou art;

Lo, we bring thee the daintiest and costliest perfumes of our humble obediences ; yea, if so much of our blood, as this woman brought ointment, may be useful, or pleasing to thy name, we do most chearfully consecrate it unto thee. If we would not have thee think heaven too good for us, why should we stick at any earthly retribution to thee, in lieu of thy great mercies.

Yet here, I see more then the price ; this odouriferous perfume was that, wherewith she had wont to make herself pleasing to her wanton lovers ; and now, she comes purposely to offer it up to her Saviour.

As her love was turned another way from sensual to divine, so shall her ointment also be altered in the use ; that which was abused to luxury, shall now be consecrated to devotion : There is no other effect in whatsoever true conversion ; *As we have given our members servants to iniquity to commit iniquity, so shall we now give our members servants unto righteousness, in holiness.* If the dames of *Israel* that thought nothing more worth looking on than their own faces, have spent too much time in their glasses, now they shall cast in those metals to make a laver for the washing off their uncleannesses : If I have spent the prime of my strength, the strength of my wit upon myself and vanity ; I have bestowed my alabaster-box amiss : Oh now teach me, my God and Saviour, to improve all my time, all my abilities to thy glory ; this is all the poor recompence can be made thee for those shameful dishonours thou hast received from me.

The woman is come in ; and now, she doth not boldly face Christ ; but as unworthy of his presence she stands behind ; How could she in that situation wash his feet with her tears ? Was it, that our Saviour did not sit at the feast (after our fashion) but according to the then *Jewish* and *Roman* fashion, lay on the one side ? Or was it that this phrase doth not so much import posture, as presence ? Doubtless, it was bashfulness



fulness and shame arising from the conscience of her own former wickedness, that placed her thus: How well is the case altered? She had wont to look boldly in the face of her lovers; now she dares not behold the awful countenance of her Saviour; she had wont to send her alluring beams forth into the eyes of her wanton paramours; now she casts her dejected eyes to the earth, and dare not so much as raise them up to see those eyes, from which she desired commiseration; it was a true inference of the prophet, *Thou hast an whore's forehead, thou canst not blush*; there cannot be a greater sign of whorishness, than impudence; this woman can now blush, she hath put off the harlot, and is turned true penitent: Bashfulness is both a sign, and effect of grace. O God, could we but bethink how wretched we are in nature, how vile through our sins; how glorious, holy, and powerful a God thou art, (before whom the brightest Angels hide their faces) we could not come but with a trembling awfulness into thy presence.

Together with shame, here is sorrow; A sorrow testified by tears; and tears in such abundance, that she washes the feet of our Saviour with those streams of penitence. *She began to wash his feet with tears*, we hear when she began, we hear not when she ended. When the grapes are pressed the juice runs forth; so when the mind is pressed, tears distil; the true juice of penitence and sorrow; these eyes were not used to such clouds, or to such showers; there was nothing in them formerly, but sun-shine of pleasure, beams of lust; now they are resolved into the drops of grief and contrition; whence was this change but from the secret working of God's spirit? He caused his wind to blow, and the waters flowed; he smote the rock, and the waters gushed out; Oh God smite thou this rocky heart of mine, and the waters of repentance shall burst forth in abundance.

Never

Never were thy feet, O Saviour, bedewed with more precious liquor, than this of remorseful tears; these cannot be so spent, but that thou keepest them in thy bottle; yea thou returnest them back with interest of true comfort; *They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy: Blessed are they that mourn.* Lo this wet seed-time shall be followed with an harvest of happiness and glory.

That this service might be compleat, as her eyes were the ewr, so her hair was the towel for the feet of Christ. Doubtless at a feast there was no want of the most curious linnen for this purpose; all this was nothing to her; to approve her sincere humility, and hearty devotion to Christ, her hair shall be put to this glorious office: The hair is the chief ornament of woman-hood: The feet, as they are the lowest part of the body, so the meanest for account, and homeliest for employment; and lo, this penitent bestows the chief ornament of her head, on the meanest office to the feet of her Saviour; that hair which she was wont to spread as a net to catch her amorous companions, is honoured with the employment of whipping the beautiful feet of him, that brought the glad tidings of peace and salvation; and, might it have been any service to him, to have licked the dust under those feet of his, how gladly would she have done it? Nothing can be mean that is done to the honour of a Saviour.

Never was any hair so preferred as this; how I envy those locks that were graced with the touch of those sacred feet; but much more those lips that kissed them: Those lips that had been formerly inured to the wanton touches of her lascivious lovers, now sanctify themselves with the testimony of her humble homage, and dear respects to the Son of God. Thus her ointment, hands, eyes, hair, lips are now consecrated to the service of Christ her Saviour, whom she had offended: If our satisfaction be not in some kind  
propor-

proportionable to our offence, we are no true penitents.

All this while I hear not one word fall from the mouth of this woman. What need her tongue speak, when her eyes spake, her hands spake, her gesture, her countenance, her whole carriage was vocal? I like this silent speaking well, when our actions talk, and our tongues hold their peace: The common practice is contrary; men's tongues are busy, but their hands are still; all their religion lies in their tongue, their hands either do nothing, or ill, so as their profession is but wind, as their words: Wherefore are words but for expression of the mind? if that could be known by the eye, or by the hand, the language of both were alike. There are no words amongst spirits, yet they perfectly understand each other; the heavens declare the glory of God; all tongues cannot speak so loud, as they that have none. Give me the christian that is seen, and not heard. The noise that our tongue makes in a formality of profession, shall (in the silence of our hands) condemn us for hypocrites.

The *Pharisee* saw all this, but with an evil eye; had he not had some grace, he had never invited such a guest as Jesus; and if he had had grace enough, he had never entertained such a thought as this of the guest he invited. *If this man were a prophet, he would have known what manner of woman it is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.*

How many errors in one breath? Justly (O *Simon*) hath this one thought lost thee the thanks of thy feast: Belike, at the highest, thou judgest thy guest but a prophet, and now thou doubtest whether he were so much; besides this undervaluation, how unjust is the ground of this doubt? Every prophet knew not every thing; yea, no prophet ever knew all things; *Elisba* knew the very secrets of the *Affyrian* privy-chamber: Yet he knew not the calamity of his worthy hostess.

The finite knowledge of the ablest seer reaches but so far as it will please God to extend it; well might he therefore have been a prophet, and in the knowledge of greater matters not have known this.

Unto this, how weakly didst thou, because of Christ's silent admission of the woman, suppose him ignorant of her quality? as if knowledge should be measured always by the noise of expression; stay but a while, and thou shalt find that he well knew both her life, and thy heart: Besides, how injuriously dost thou take this woman for what she was, not conceiving (as well thou mightest) were not this woman a convert, she would never have offered herself into this presence; her modesty, and her tears bewray her change; and if she be changed, why is she censured for what she is not?

Lastly, How strong did it favour of the leaven of thy profession, that thou supposest (were she what she was) that it could not stand with the knowledge and holiness of a prophet, to admit of her least touch, yea, of her presence. Whereas, on the one side outward conversation, in itself, makes no man unclean, or holy, but according to the disposition of the patient: On the other, such was the purity and perfection of this thy glorious guest, that it was not possibly infectible, nor any way obnoxious to the danger of other sin: He that said once, *Who touched me?* in regard of virtue issuing from him, never said, whom have I touched, in regard of any contagion incident into him. We sinful creatures, in whom the Prince of this world finds too much, may easily be tainted with other men's sins; he, who came to take away the sins of the world, was incapable of pollution by sin: Had the woman then been still a sinner, thy censure of Christ was proud and unjust.

The *Pharisee* spake, but it was within himself; and now, behold, *Jesus answering*; What we think, we speak to our hearts, and we speak to God; and he



he equally hears, as if it came out of our mouths, thoughts are not free, could men know and convince them, they would be no less liable to censure, than if they came forth clothed with words; God, who hears them, judges of them accordingly: So here, the heart of *Simon* speaks, Jesus answers.

Jesus answers him but with a parable; he answers many a thought with judgment; the blasphemy of the heart, the murder of the heart, the adultery of the heart are answered by him with real vengeance; for *Simon*, our Saviour saw his error was either out of simple ignorance, or weak mistaking; where he saw no malice, then, it is enough to answer with a gentle conviction; the convictive answer of Christ, is by way of parable. The wisdom of God knows how to circumvent us for our gain; and can speak that pleasingly by a prudent circumlocution, which right-down would not be digested. Had our Saviour said, in plain terms, *Simon* whither dost thou, or this sinner love me more? The *Pharisee* could not for shame, but have stood upon his reputation; and, in a scorn of the comparison, have protested his exceeding respects to Christ; now, ere he is aware, he is fetch'd in to give sentence against himself for her whom he condemned; O Saviour, thou hast made us fishers of men, how should we learn of thee so to bait our hooks, that they may be most likely to take? Thou the great householder of thy church hast provided victuals for thy family, thou hast appointed us to dress them; if we do not so cook them as that they may fit the palates, to which they are intended, we do both lose our labour and thy cost.

The parable is of two debtors to one creditor, the one owed a lesser sum, the other a greater; both are forgiven: It was not the purpose of him that propounded it, that we should stick in the bark; God is our creditor, our sins, our debts; we are all debtors, but one more deep than another; no man can pay this debt alone; fatis-

fatisfaction is not possible; only remission can discharge us; God doth in mercy forgive as well the greatest, as the least sins; our love to God is proportionable to the sense of our remission: So then the *Pharisee* cannot choose but confess, that the more and greater the sin is, the greater mercy in the forgiveness; and the more mercy in the forgiver, the greater obligation, and more love in the forgiven.

Truth, from whose mouth soever it falls, is worth taking up; our Saviour praises the true judgment of a *Pharisee*; it is an injurious indiscretion in those who are so prejudiced against the persons, that they reject the truth; he that would not quench the smoking flax, encourages even the least good; as the careful Surgeon strokes the arm, ere he strikes the vein; so did Christ here, ere he convinces the *Pharisee* of his want of love, he graceth him with a fair approbation of his judgment. Yet, the while, turning both his face and his speech to the poor penitent, as one that cared more for a true humiliation for sin, than for a false pretence of respect and innocence.

With what a dejected and abashed countenance, with what earth-fixed eyes, do we imagine the poor woman stood, when she saw her Saviour direct his face and words to her. She that durst but stand behind him, and steal the falling of some tears upon his feet, with what a blushing astonishment doth she behold his sidereal countenance cast upon her? whilst his eye was turned towards this penitent, his speech was turned to the *Pharisee* concerning that penitent, by him mistaken. *Seest thou this woman?* He, who before had said, *If this man were a prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is*, now hears, *seest thou this woman?* Simon saw but her outside, Jesus lets him see that he saw her heart; and will thus convince the *Pharisee*, that he is more than a prophet, who knew not her conversation only, but her soul; the *Pharisee*, that went all by appearance, shall by her

her deportment see the proof of her good disposition ; it shall happily shame him to hear the comparison of the wants of his own entertainments, with the abundance of hers.

It is strange that any of this formal sect should be defective in their lotions ; *Simon* had not given water to so great a guest ; she washes his feet with her tears ; by how much the water of the eye was more precious than the water of the earth, so much was the respect, and courtesy of this penitent, above the neglected office of the Pharisee. What use was there of a towel, where was no water ? She that made a fountain of her eyes, made precious napary of her hair ; that better flax shamed the linnen in the Pharisee's chest.

A kiss of the cheek had wont to be pledge of the welcome of their guests ; *Simon* neglects to make himself thus happy ; she redoubles the kisses of her humble thankfulness upon the blessed feet of her Saviour. The Pharisee omits ordinary oil for the head ; she supplies the most precious and fragrant oil to his feet. Now the Pharisee reads his own taxation in her praise ; and begins to envy where he had scorned.

It is our fault, O Saviour, if we mistake thee ; we are ready to think, so thou have the substance of good usage, thou regardest not the compliments and ceremonies ; whereas, now, we see thee to have both meat and welcome in the Pharisee's house, and yet hear thee glance at his neglect of washing, kissing, anointing ? Doubtless, omission of due circumstances in thy entertainment may deserve to lose our thanks ; Do we pray to thee ? Do we hear thee preach to us ? now we make thee good cheer in our house ; but, if we perform not these things with the fit decency of our outward carriages, we give thee not thy water, thy kisses, thy oil : Even meet ritual observances are requisite for thy full welcome.

Yet, how little had these things been regarded, if they had not argued the woman's thankful love to thee ;

thee; and the ground of love, sense of her remission, and the Pharisee's default in both.

Love and action do necessarily evince each other; true love cannot lurk long unexpressed; it will be looking out at the eyes, creeping out of the mouth, breaking out at the fingers ends, in some actions of dearness; especially those, wherein there is pain and difficulty to the agent; profit, or pleasure to the affected. O Lord, in vain shall we profess to love thee, if we do nothing for thee; since our goodness cannot reach up unto thee, who art our glorious head; oh let us bestow upon thy feet (thy poor members here below) our tears, our hands, our ointment, and whatever our gifts, or endeavours may testify our thankfulness; and love thee in them.

Oh happy word; *her sins, which are many, are forgiven her*; methinks I see how this poor penitent revived with this breath; how new life comes into her eyes, new blood into her cheeks; new spirits into her countenance; like unto our mother-earth, when in that first confusion, God said, *Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that beareth seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit*; all runs out into flowers, and blossoms, and leaves, and fruit; her former tears said, *Who shall deliver me from this body of death?* now her chearful smiles say, *I thank God thro' Jesus Christ my Lord.*

Seldom ever do we meet with so perfect a penitent; seldom do we find so gracious a dismissal; What can be wished of any mortal creature, but remission, safety, faith, peace? all these are here met to make a contrite soul happy; remission the ground of her safety, faith the ground of her peace, safety and salvation the issue of her remission; peace the blessed fruit of her faith.

Oh woman, the perfume that thou broughtest, is poor, and base, in comparison of those sweet favours of rest and happiness that are returned to thee; well was that ointment bestowed, wherewith thy soul is sweetened to all eternity.

MAR-



## XXXI. MARTHA and MARY.

LUKE x. 38—42.

**WE** may read long enough ere we find Christ in an house of his own; *The foxes have holes, and the birds have nests*, he that had all, possessed nothing; one while, I see him in a Publican's house, then in a Pharisee's; now I find him at *Martha's*; his last entertainment was with some neglect, this, with too much solicitude. Our Saviour was now in his way; the sun might as soon stand still as he.

The more we move, the liker we are to heaven, and to this God that made it, his progress was to *Jerusalem*, for some holy feast; he whose devotion neglected not any of those sacred solemnities, will not neglect the due opportunities of his bodily refreshing, as not thinking it meet to travel, and preach harbourless, he diverts (whither he knew his welcome) to the village of *Bethany*. There dwelt the two devout sisters, with their brother, his friend *Lazarus*; their roof receives him; O happy house into which the Son of God vouchsafed to set his foot; O blessed women, that had the grace to be the hostesses to the God of heaven; How should I envy your felicity herein, if I did not see the same favour (if I be not wanting to myself) lying open to me; I have two ways to entertain my Saviour, in his members, and in himself; in his members, by charity and hospitableness; what I do to one of those his little ones, I do to him; in himself, by faith; if any man open, he will come in and sup with him.

Oh Saviour thou standest at the door of our hearts, and knockest, by the solicitations of thy messengers, by the sense of thy chastisements, by the motions of thy spirit; if we open to thee, by a willing admission and faithful welcome, thou wilt be sure to take up our souls with thy gracious presence, and not to sit with us for a momentary meal, but to dwell with us forever;

forever; lo, thou didst but call in, at *Bethany*; but here shall be thy rest for everlasting.

*Martha* (it seems) as being the elder sister, bore the name of the house keeper; *Mary* was her assistant in the charge; a blessed pair; sisters, not more in nature, than grace, in spirit no less than in flesh. How happy a thing it is when all the parties in a family are jointly agreed to entertain Christ?

No sooner is Jesus entered into the house than he falls to preaching; that no time may be lost, he stays not so much, as till his meat be made ready; but whilst his bodily repast was in hand, provides spiritual food for his hosts; it was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father; he fed more upon his own diet, than he could possibly upon theirs; his best cheer was to see them spiritually fed; How should we, whom he hath called to this sacred function, be instant, in season, and out of season? We are, by his sacred ordination, the lights of the world; no sooner is the candle lighted than it gives that light which it hath, and never intermits, till it be wasted to the snuff.

Both the sisters, for a time, sat attentively listening to the words of Christ: Household occasions call *Martha* away: *Mary* sits still at his feet, and hears; Whither shall we more praise her humility, or her docility? I do not see her take a stool, and sit by him; or a chair, and sit above him; but, as desiring to shew her heart was as low, as her knees, she sits at his feet: She was lowly set, richly warmed with those heavenly beams: The greater submission, the more grace: If there be one hollow in the valley lower than another, thither the waters gather.

*Martha's* house is become a divinity school, Jesus, as the doctor, sits in the chair; *Martha*, *Mary*, and the rest, sit as disciples, at his feet; standing, implies a readiness of motion; sitting, a settled composedness to this holy attendance.

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Had these two sisters provided our Saviour never such delicacies, and waited on his trencher never so officiously; yet had they not listened to his instruction, they had not bidden him welcome; neither had he so well liked his entertainment.

This was the way to feast him; to feed their ears by his heavenly doctrine; his best cheer is our proficiency; our best cheer is his word. O Saviour, let my soul be thus feasted by thee, do thou thus feast thyself by feeding me; this mutual diet shall be thy praise, and my happiness.

Though *Martha* was for the time an attentive hearer, yet now, her care of Christ's entertainment carries her into the kitchen; *Mary* sits still; neither was *Mary* more devout than *Martha* busy; *Martha* cares to feast Jesus, *Mary*, to be feasted of him; there was more solicitude in *Martha's* active part, more piety in *Mary's* sedentary attendance; I know not in whether more zeal: Good *Martha* was desirous to express her joy, and thankfulness for the presence of so blessed a guest, by the actions of her careful and plenteous entertainment; I know not how to censure the holy woman for her excess of care, to welcome her Saviour; sure she herself thought she did well; and out of that confidence, fears not to complain to Christ of her sister.

I do not see her come to her sister, and whisper in her ear the great need of her aid; but she comes to Jesus, and in a kind of unkind expostulation of her neglect, makes her moan to him, *Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Why did she not rather make her first address to her sister? Was it for that she knew Mary was so tied by the ears with those adamantine chains that came from the mouth of Christ, that until his silence and dismissal, she had no power to stir? Or was it out of an honour and respect to Christ, that in his presence she*

ſhe would not preſume to call off her ſiſter, without his leave.

Howſoever, I cannot excuſe the holy Woman from ſome weakneſſes ; It was a fault to meaſure her ſiſter by herſelf, and apprehending her own act to be good, to think her ſiſter could not do well, if ſhe did not ſo too : Whereas goodneſs hath much latitude ; ill is oppoſed to good, not good to good ; neither in things lawful or indifferent, are others bound to our examples ; *Mary* might hear, *Martha* might ſerve, and both do well ; *Mary* did not cenſure *Martha* for her riſing from the feet of Chriſt, to prepare his meal ; neither ſhould *Martha* have cenſured *Mary* for ſitting at Chriſt's feet, to feed her ſoul. It was a fault, that ſhe thought an exceſſive care of a liberal outward entertainment of Chriſt was to be preferred to a diligent attention to Chriſt's ſpiritual entertainment of them : It was a fault, that ſhe durſt preſume to queſtion our Saviour of ſome kind of un-reſpect to her toil, *Lord doſt thou not care ?* What ſayeſt thou *Martha* ? doſt thou challenge the Lord of heaven and earth of incogitancy and neglect ? doſt thou take upon thee to preſcribe unto that infinite wiſdom, inſtead of receiving directions from him ? It is well thou meeteſt with a Saviour, whoſe gracious mildneſs knows how to pardon, and pity the errors of our zeal.

Yet, I muſt needs ſay, here wanted not fair pretences for the ground of this thy expoſtulation ; thou the elder ſiſter, workeſt ; *Mary* the younger, ſits ſtill ; and, what work was thine but the hofpitable receipt of thy Saviour and his train ? had it been for thine own paunch, or for ſome carnal friends, it had been leſs excuſable ; now, it was for Chriſt himſelf, to whom thou couldſt never be too obſequious.

But all this cannot deliver thee from the juſt blame of this bold ſubincufation ; *Lord, doſt thou not care ?* How ready is our weakneſs, upon every ſlight diſ-contentment



contentment to quarrel with our best friend; yea with our good God; and the more we are put to it, to think ourselves the more neglected; and to challenge God for our neglect? do we groan on the bed of our sickness, and languishing in pain, complain of long hours and weary sides, straight we think, Lord dost thou not care what we suffer? doth God's poor Church go to wrack, whilst the ploughers ploughing on her back, make long furrows; Lord, dost thou not care? But, know thou, O thou feeble and distrustful soul, the more thou doest, the more thou suffereſt, the more thou art cared for; neither is God ever so tender over his Church, as when it is most exercised: Every pang, and stitch, and gird, is first felt of him that sends it. O God, thou knowest our works, and our labour, and our patience; we may be ignorant, and diffident, thou canst not but be gracious.

It could not but trouble devout *Mary* to hear her sister's impatient complaint; a complaint of herself to Christ, with such vehemence of passion, as if there had been such strangeness betwixt the two sisters, that the one would do nothing for the other, without an external compulsion from a superior; how can she choose but think, if I have offended, why was I not secretly taxed for it in a sisterly familiarity? what if there have been some little omission, must the whole house ring of it, before my Lord, and all his disciples? Is this carriage beſeeming a sister? Is my devotion worthy of a quarrel; Lord dost thou not care that I am injuriously censured; yet I hear not a word of reply from that modest mouth; O holy *Mary*, I admire thy patient silence; thy sister blames thee for thy piety; the disciples (afterwards) blame thee for thy bounty and cost; not a word falls from thee. in a just vindication of thine honour, and innocence, but in an humble taciturnity thou leavest thine answer to thy Saviour.

How should we learn of thee, when we are complained of, for well-doing to seal up our lips, and to expect our righting from above.

And how sure, how ready art thou, O Saviour to speak in the cause of the dumb ; *Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things ; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen the better part.*

What needed *Mary* to speak for herself, when she had such an advocate ? doubtless, *Martha* was, as it were, divided from herself, with the multiplicity of her carefull thoughts, our Saviour therefore doubles her name in his compellation ; that in such distraction, he may both find, and fix her heart. The good woman made full account that Christ would have sent away her sister with a check, and herself with thanks ; but now, her hopes fail her ; and though she be not directly reprov'd, yet she hears her sister more approved than she ; *Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things.* Our Saviour received courtesy from her, in her diligent and costly entertainment, yet he would not blanch her error, and smooth her up in her weak mis-prision. No obligations may so enthrall us, as that our tongues should not be free to reprove faults where we find them ; they are base and servile spirits that will have their tongue tied to their teeth.

This glance towards a reproof implies an opposition of the condition of the two sisters ; themselves were not more near in nature, then their present humour and estate differed ; one is opposed to many, necessary to superfluous, solicitude to quietness : *Thou art carefull and troubled about many things, one thing is necessary.* How far then may our care reach to these earthly things ? On the one side, O Saviour, thou hast charged us to take no thought what to eat, drink, put on ; on the other, thy chosen vessel hath told us, that he that provides not for his family, hath  
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denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. We may, we must care for many things; so that our care be for good, and well: For *good*, both in kind and measure; *will*, so as our care be free from distraction, from distrust; from distraction, that it hinder us not from the necessary duties of our general calling; from distrust, that we misdoubt not God's providence, whilst we employ our own. We cannot care for thee, unless we thus care for ourselves, for ours.

Alas, how much care do I see every where, but how few *Martha's*? Her care was for her Saviour's entertainment, ours for ourselves; one finds perplexities in his estate, which he desires to extricate; another beats his brains, for the raising of his house; one busies his thoughts about the doubtful condition (as he thinks) of the times; and casts in his anxious head, the imaginary events of all things, opposing his hopes to his fears; another studies how to avoid the violent blows of an adversary; *Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things.* Foolish men, why do we set our hearts upon the rack, and need not? Why will we indure to bend under that burden, which more able shoulders have offered to undertake for our ease?

Thou hast bidden us, O God, to cast our cares upon thee, with promise to care for us; we do gladly unload ourselves upon thee; oh let our care be to depend on thee, as thine is to provide for us.

Whether *Martha* be pitied, or taxed for her sedulity, I am sure, *Mary* is praised for her devotion; *One thing is necessary*, not by way of negation\*, as if nothing were necessary but this; but by way of comparison; as that nothing is so necessary as this; earthly occasions must avail to spiritual; of those three main grounds of all our actions, necessity, convenience, pleasure, each transcends other; convenience carries it away from pleasure; necessity from convenience: And one degree of necessity from another; the degrees

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are according to the conditions of the things necessary; the condition of these earthly necessities is, that without them we cannot live temporally, the condition of the spiritual, that without them we cannot live eternally: so much difference then, as there is betwixt temporary and eternal, so much there must needs be betwixt the necessity of these bodily actions, and those spiritual, both are necessary in their kinds; neither must here be an opposition but a subordination. The body and soul must be friends, not rivals; we may not so ply the Christian, that we neglect the man.

Oh the vanity of those men who neglecting that one thing necessary, affect many things superfluous; nothing is needless with worldly minds but this one which is only necessary, the care of their souls; how justly do they lose that they care not for, while they over care for that, which is neither worthy, nor possible to be kept.

Neither is *Mary's* business more allowed, than herself. *She hath chosen the good part*; it was not forced upon her, but taken up by her election; *Martins* might have set still, as well as she: she might have stir'd about as well, as *Martha*: *Mary* well made this choice; not without the inclination of him, who both gave this will, and commends it; that will was before renewed; no marvel if it chose the good; though this were not in a case of good and evil; but of good, and better; we have still this holy freedom, through the in-operation of him that hath freed us: happy are we if we can improve this liberty to the best advantage of our souls.

The stability, or perpetuity of good adds much to the praise of it; *Martha's* part was soon gone; the thank and use of a little outward hospitality cannot long last; but, *Mary's* shall not be taken away from her: the act of her hearing was transient, the fruit permanent, she now hears that, which shall stick by her for ever.

What



What couldst thou hear, O holy *Mary*, from those sacred lips, which we hear not still? that heavenly doctrine is never but the same, not more subject to change than the author of it; it is not impossible that the exercise of the Gospel should be taken from us; but the benefit and virtue of it, is as inseparable from our souls, as their being: in the hardest times, that shall stick closest to us; and till death, in death, after death shall make us happy.



**XXXII.** *The Beggar that was born blind, cured.*

Read St. JOHN Chap. ix. throughout.

**T**HE man was born blind; this cure requires not art, but power; a power no less than infinite and divine; nature presupposeth a matter, though formless; art looks for matter formed to our hands; God stands not upon either, where there was not an eye to be healed, what could an oculist do? it is only a God that can create. Such are we, O God, to all spiritual things; we want not sight, but eyes; it must be thou only, that canst make us capable of illumination.

The blind man sat begging; those that have eyes, and hands, and feet of their own, may be able to help themselves; those that want these helps must be beholden to the eyes, hands, feet of others; the impotent are cast upon our mercy; happy are we, if we can lend limbs and senses to the needy: affected beggary is odious, that which is of God's making justly challengeth relief.

Where should this blind man sit begging, but near the Temple? at one gate sits a cripple; a blind man at another; well might these miserable souls suppose, that piety and charity dwelt close together; the two

tables were both of one quarry. Then are we best disposed to mercy, towards our brethren, when we have either craved, or acknowledged God's mercy towards ourselves; if we go thither to beg of God, how can we deny mites, when we hope for talents.

Never did Jesus move one foot, but to purpose; he passed by, but so, as that his virtue staid; so did he pass by, that his eye was fixed; the blind man could not see him, he sees the blind man; his goodness prevents us; and yields better supplies to our wants; he saw compassionately, not shutting his eyes, not turning them aside, but bending them upon that dark, and disconsolate object. That which was said of the sun, is much more true of him that made it; nothing is hid from his light; but, of all other things, miseries (especially of his own people) are most attentively eyed of him: could we be miserable, unseen; we had reason to be heartless. O Saviour, why should we not imitate thee in this merciful improvement of our senses? we be to those eyes that care only to gaze upon their own beauty, bravery, wealth; not abiding to glance upon the sores of *Lazarus*, the sorrows of *Joseph*, the dungeon of *Jeremy*, the blind Beggar at the gate of the temple.

The disciples see the blind man too, but with different eyes: our Saviour, for pity and cure; they for expostulation; *Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he is born blind?* I like well that whatsoever doubt troubled them, they strait vent it into the ear of their master; O Saviour, whilst thou art in heaven, thy school is upon earth: wherefore serve thy priests lips, but to preserve knowledge? what use is there of the tongue of the learned, but, to speak a word in season? thou teachest us still, and still we doubt and ask, and learn.

In one short question I find two truths, and two falsehoods; the truths implied, the falsehoods expressed. It is true, that commonly man's suffering is for sin,  
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that we may justly, and do often suffer even for the sins of our parents; it is false, that there is no other reason of our suffering but sin; that a man could sin actually before he was, or was before his being, or could before hand suffer for his after sins; in all likelihood that absurd conceit of the transmigration of souls possessed the very disciples; how easily, and how far may the best be miscarried with a common error? we are not thankful for our own illumination, if we do not look with charity and pity upon the gross mis-opinions of our brethren.

Our Saviour sees, and yet will wink at so foul a misprision of his disciples, I hear neither chiding nor conviction; he that could have inlightned their minds (as he did the world) at once, will do it by due leisure, and only contents himself here with a mild solution, *Neither this man, nor his parents:* we learn nothing of thee, O Saviour, if not meekness: what a sweet temper should be in our carriage towards the weaknesses of others judgement? how should we instruct them without bitterness, and without violence of passion expect the meet seasons of their better information? the tender mother or nurse doth not rate her little one for that he goes not well; but gives him her hand, that he may go better: it is the spirit of lenity that must restore, and confirm the lapsed.

The answer is direct, and punctual; neither the sin of the man, nor of his parents bereaved him of his eyes; there was an higher cause of this privation; the glory that God meant to win unto himself by redressing it: the parents had sinned in themselves, the man had sinned in his first parents; it is not the guilt of either, that is guilty of this blindness: all God's afflictive acts are not punishments; some are for the benefit of the creature, whether for probation, or prevention, or reformation, all are for the praise, whether of his divine power, or justice or mercy.

It was fit so great a work should be usher'd in with a preface. A sudden and abrupt appearance would not have seem'd so glorious a demonstration of omnipotence. The way is made, our Saviour addresses himself to the miracle; a miracle, not more in the thing done, than in the form of doing it.

The matter us'd was clay: could there be a meaner? could there be ought more unfit? O Saviour, how oft hadst thou cured blindness by thy word alone? how oft by thy touch? how easily couldst thou have done so here? was this to show whether thy liberty, or thy power? liberty, in that thou canst at pleasure use variety of means, not being tied to any; power, in that thou couldst make use of contraries: hadst thou pull'd out a box and applied some medicinal ointment to the eyes, something had been ascribed to thy skill; more to the natural power of thy receipt; now, thou mad'st use of clay, which had been enough to stop up the eyes of the seeing, the virtue must be all in thee, none in the means: the utter disproportion of this help to the cure adds glory to the worker.

How clearly didst thou hence evince to the world, that thou who of clay couldst make eyes, were the same who of clay hadst made man; since there is no part of the body that hath so little analogy to clay, as the eye; this clearness is contrary to that opacity: had not the Jews been more blind than the man whom thou curedst, and more hard and stiff than the clay which thou mollifiedst, they had, in this one work, both seen and acknowledged thy deity.

What could the clay have done, without thy tempering? it was thy spittle that made the clay effectual; it was that sacred mouth of thine, that made the spittle medicinal; the water of *Sihon* shall but wash off that clay, which this inward moisture made powerful. The clay thus tempered, must be applied by the hand that made it, else it avails nothing.

What



What must the blind man needs think, when he felt the cold clay upon the holes of his eyes; or (since he could not conceive what an eye was) what must the beholders need think, to see that hollowness thus filled up? Is this the way to give either eyes or sight? why did not the earth see with this clay, as well as the man? What is there to hinder the sight, if this make it?

Yet with these contrarieties must the faith be exercised, where God intends the blessing of a cure.

It was never meant that this clay should dwell upon those pits of the eyes; it is only put on, to be washed off; and that, not by every water; none shall do it, but that of *Siloam*; which signifies *Sent*; and if the man had not been sent to *Siloam*, he had been still blind. All things receive their virtue from divine institution; how else should a piece of wheaten bread nourish the Soul? How should spring water wash off spiritual filthiness? How should the foolishness of preaching save souls? How should the absolution of God's Minister be more effectual than the breath of an ordinary Christian? Thou, O God, hast set apart these ordinances; thy blessing is annexed to them; hence is the ground of all our use, and their efficacy: Hadst thou so instituted, *Jordan* would as well have healed blindness, and *Siloam* leprosy.

That the man might be capable of such a miracle, his faith is set on work; he must be led, with his eyes daubed up, to the pool of *Siloam*. He washes, and sees. Lord, what did this man think when his eyes were now first given him? What a new world did he find himself now come into? how did he wonder at heaven and earth? and the faces and shapes of all creatures; the goodly varieties of colours, the cheerfulness of the light, the lively beams of the Sun, the vast expansion of the air, the pleasant transparency of the water, at the glorious piles of the Temple, and stately palaces of *Jerusalem*; every thing

did not more please, than astonish him; Lo, thus shall we be affected, and more, when the scales of our mortality being done away, we shall see as we are seen; when we shall behold the blessedness of that other world, the glory of the saints and angels, the infinite Majesty of the Son of God, the incomprehensible brightness of the all-glorious deity; Oh my soul that thou couldst be taken up before-hand with the admiration of that, which thou canst not as yet be capable of fore-seeing!

It could not be but that many eyes had been witnesses of this man's want of eyes. He sat begging at one of the Temple-gates; not only all the city, but all the country must needs know him; thrice a year did they come up to *Jerusalem*; neither could they come to the Temple and not see him. His very blindness made him noted; deformities and infirmities of body do more easily both draw and fix the eye, than an ordinary symmetry of parts.

Besides his blindness, his trade made him remarkable; the importunity of his begging drew the eyes of the passengers; but of all other, the place most notified him. Had he sat in some obscure village of *Judæa*, or in some blind lane of *Jerusalem*, perhaps, he had not been heeded of many, but now, that he took up his seat in the heart, in the head of the chief City, whither all resorted from all parts, what Jew can there be that knows not the blind beggar at the Temple-gate? Purposely, did our Saviour make choice of such a subject for his miracle; a man so poor, so publick; the glory of the work could not have reach'd so far, if it had been done to the wealthiest citizen of *Jerusalem*: Neither was it for nothing, that the act and the man is doubted of and inquired into by the beholders; *Is not this he that sat begging; some said it is he; others said, it is like him.* No truths have received so full proofs, as those that have been questioned. The want of, the sudden presence of  
an

an eye, (much more of both) most needs make a great change in the face; those little balls of light (which no doubt were more clear than nature could have made them) could not but give a new life to the countenance. I marvel not if the neighbours, which had wont to see this dark visage led by a guide, and guided by a staff, walking confidently alone, out of his own inward light, and looking them cheerfully in the face, doubted whether this were he. The miraculous cures of God work a sensible alteration in men, not more in their own apprehension, than in the judgment of others. Thus, in the redress of the spiritual blindness, the whole habit of the man is changed; where before, his face looked dull and earthly, now there is a sprightly cheerfulness in it, through the comfortable knowledge of God, and heavenly things; whereas before his heart was set upon worldly things, now, he uses them but enjoys them not; and that use is because he must, not because he would, where before his fears and griefs were only for pains of body, or loss of estate or reputation, now they are only spent upon the displeasure of his God, and the peril of his soul; so as now, the neighbours can say, *Is this the man; others, it is like him, it is not he.*

The late blind man hears, and now sees himself questioned, and soon resolves the doubt, *I am he*; he that now saw the light of the Sun, would not hide the light of truth from others; it is an unthankful silence to smother the works of God in an affected secrecy; to make God a loser by his bounty to us, were a shameful injustice; we ourselves abide not those sponges that suck up good turns unknown; O God, we are not worthy of our spiritual eye-sight, if we do not publish thy mercies on the house top, and praise thee in the great congregation.

Man is naturally inquisitive, we search studiously into the secret works of nature; we pry into the re-

sons of the witty inventions of art, but if there be any thing that transcends art and nature, the more high and abstruse it is, the more busy we are to seek into it. This thirst after hidden, yea forbidden knowledge did once cost us dear; but, where it is good and lawful to know, inquiry is commendable, as here in these Jews; *How were thine eyes opened?* The first improvement of human reason is inquisition, the next is information and resolution; and, if the meanest events pass us not without a question, how much less those that carry in them wonder, and advantage?

He that was so ready to profess himself the subject of the cure, is no niggard of proclaiming the author of it, *A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and sent me to Siloam to wash, and now I see.* The blind man knew no more than he said, and he said what he apprehended, *A man*; He heard Jesus speak, he felt his hand; as yet he could look no further; upon his next meeting, he saw God in this man. In matters of knowledge, we must be content to creep ere we can go. As that other recovered blind man saw first men walk like trees, after like men; so no marvel if this man saw first this God only as man, after this man as God also; onwards he thinks him a wonderful man, a mighty prophet; in vain shall we either expect a sudden perfection in the understanding of divine matters, or censure those that want it.

How did this man know what Jesus did? He was then stone-blind; what distinction could he yet make of persons, of actions? True; but yet the blind man never wanted the assistance of others eyes; their relation hath assur'd him of the manner of his cure; besides the contribution of his other senses, his ear might perceive the spittle to fall, and hear the enjoin'd command; his feeling perceived the cold, and moist clay upon his eye-lids; all these conjoined, gave sufficient warrant thus to believe, thus to report; our ear is our best guide to a full apprehension of the  
works



works of Christ; the works of God the Father, his creation and government, are best known by the eye; the works of God the Son, his redemption, and mediation are best known by the ear. O Saviour, we cannot personally see what thou hast done here: what are the monuments of thine Apostles and Evangelists, but the relations of the blind man's guide, what and how thou hast wrought for us? On these we strongly rely, these we do no less confidently believe, than if our very eyes had been witnesses of what thou didst, and sufferedst upon earth: There were no place for faith, if the ear were not worthy of as much credit as the eye.

How could the neighbours less than ask where he was that had done so strange a cure? I doubt yet with what mind; I fear, not out of favour; had they been but indifferent, they could not but have been full of silent wonder, and inclined to believe in so omnipotent an agent; now, as prejudiced to Christ, and partial to the Pharisees, they bring the late-blind man before those professed enemies unto Christ.

It is the preposterous religion of the vulgar sort to claw and adore those which have tyrannically usurped upon their souls though with neglect, yea with contempt of God in his word, in his works. Even unjust authority will never want soothing up in whatsoever courses, though with disgrace and opposition to the truth; base minds where they find possession, never look after right.

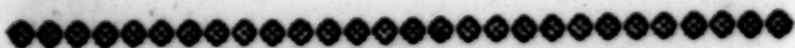
Our Saviour had pick'd out the Sabbath for this cure: It is hard to find out any time wherein charity is unseasonable; as mercy is an excellent grace, so the works of it are fittest for the best day. We are all born blind: The Font is our *Siloam*; no day can come amiss, but yet God's day is the properest for our washing and recovery.

This alone is quarrel enough to these scrupulous wranglers;

wranglers; that an act of mercy was done in that day wherein their envy was but seasonable.

I do not see the man beg any more when he once had his eyes; no burger in *Jerusalem* was richer than he; I hear him stoutly defending that gracious author of his cure against the evils of the malicious Pharisees; I see him as a resolute confessor, suffering excommunication for the name of Christ; and maintaining the innocence and honour of so blessed a benefactor; I hear him read a divinity lecture to them that sat in *Moses's* chair; and convincing them of blindness, who punished him for seeing.

How can I but envy thee, O happy man, who of a patient, provest an advocate for thy Saviour, whose gain of bodily sight made way for thy spiritual eyes, who hast lost a synagogue and hast found heaven, who being abandoned of sinners, art received of the Lord of glory.



### XXXIII. *The stubborn Devil ejected.*

MATT xvii. 14. *Comp.* Mark ix. 14.

**H**OW different, how contrary are our conditions here upon earth; whilst our Saviour is transfigured on the mount, his Disciples are perplexed in the valley; three of his choice followers were with him above, ravished with the miraculous proofs of his Godhead: nine other were troubled with the business of a stubborn Devil below.

Much people was met to attend Christ, and there they will stay till he come down from *Tabor*. Their zeal and devotion brought them thither, their patient perseverance held them there; we are not worthy the name of his clients, if we cannot painfully seek him, and submissively wait his leisure.

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He that was now awhile retired into the mount, to confer with his Father, and to receive the attendance of *Moses* and *Elias*, returns into the valley to the multitude; he was singled out awhile, for prayer and contemplation; now, he was joined with the multitude for their miraculous cure, and heavenly instruction; we that are his spiritual agents must be either preparing in the mount, or exercising in the valley; one while in the mount of meditation, in the valley of action, another: alone to study, in the assembly to preach; here is much variety, but all is work.

*Moses* when he came down from the hill, heard musick in the valley; *Christ* when he came down from the hill, heard discord; the scribes (it seems) were setting hard upon the disciples; they saw *Christ* absent, nine of his train left in the valley, those they fly upon; as the devil, so his imps, watch close for all advantages; no subtile enemy but will be sure to attempt that part, where is likelihood of least defence, most weakness; when the Spouse misses him whom her soul loveth, every watchman hath a buffet for her; O Saviour, if thou be never so little stepped aside we are sure to be assaulted with powerful temptations.

They that durst say nothing to the master, so soon as his back is turned, fall foul upon his weakest disciples; even at the first hatching the serpent was thus crafty to begin at the weaker vessel; experience and time hath not abated his wit; if he still work upon silly women laden with divers lust; upon rude and ungrounded ignorants, it is no other than his old wont.

Our Saviour upon the skirts of the hill, knew well what was done in the plain; and therefore hastes down to the rescue of his disciples; the clouds and vapours do not sooner scatter upon the sun's breaking forth, then these cavils vanish at the presence of *Christ*; instead of opposition they are straight upon their knees; here are now no quarrels, but humble  
saluta-

salutations; and if Christ's question did not force theirs, the scribes had found no tongue.

Doubtless, there were many eager patients in this throng, none made so much noise as the father of the demoniack; belike upon his occasion: it was, that the scribes held contestation with the disciples; if they wrangled, he sues, and that from his knees. Whom will not need make both humble, and eloquent? The case was woful and accordingly expressed. A son is a dear name; but this was his only son: were his grief ordinary, yet, the sorrow were the less, but he is a fearful spectacle of judgment, for he is lunatick; were this lunacy yet merely from a natural distemper, it were more tolerable; but this is aggravated, by the possession of a cruel spirit, that handles him in a most grievous manner; yet were he but in the rank of other demoniacks, the discomfort were more easy, but lo this spirit is worse than all other his fellows; others are usually dispossessed by the disciples, this is beyond their power, *I besought thy disciples to cast him out, but they could not; therefore, Lord, have thou mercy on my Son.* The despair of all other helps sends us importunately to the God of power: Here was his refuge, the strong man had gotten possession, it was only the stronger than he, that can eject him. O God, spiritual wickednesses have naturally seized upon our souls; all human helps are too weak, only thy mercy shall improve thy power to our deliverance.

What bowels could chuse but yearn at the distress of this poor young man? Frenzy had taken his brain; that disease was but health in comparison of the tyrannical possession of that evil spirit, wherewith it was seconded: out of hell there could not be a greater misery: his senses are either bereft, or else left to torment him; he is torn and racked, so as he foams and gnashes; he pines and languishes, he is cast sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water: How that malicious tyrant rejoices in the mischief done to the



the creature of God? Had earth had any thing more pernicious than fire and water, thither had he been thrown; tho' rather for torture, than dispatch; it was too much favour to die at once; O God, with how deadly enemies hast thou matched us; abate thou their power, since their malice will not be abated.

How many think of this case with pity, and horror, and in the mean time are insensible of their own fearfuller condition?

It is but oftentimes that the Devil would cast this young man into a temporary fire; he would cast the sinner into an eternal fire, whose everlasting burnings have no intermissions; no fire comes amiss to him, the fire of affliction, the fire of lust, the fire of hell; O God, make us apprehensive of the danger of our sin, and secure from the fearful issue of sin.

All these very same effects follow his spiritual possession; how doth he tear and rack them whom he vexes, and distracts with inordinate cares and sorrows? How do they foam and gnash whom he hath drawn to an impatient repining at God's afflictive hand? How do they pine away, who hourly decay, and languish in grace?

O the lamentable condition of sinful souls, so much more dangerous, by how much less felt.

But all this while, what part hath the Moon in this man's misery? how comes the name of that goodly planet in question? Certainly, these diseases of the brain follow much the course of this queen of moisture; that power which she hath in humours, is drawn to the advantage of the malicious spirit; her predominancy is abused to his despight, whether it were for the better opportunity of his vexation, or whether for the drawing of envy, and discredit upon so noble a creature; it is no news with that subtle enemy to fasten his effects upon those secondary causes which he usurps to his own purposes; whatever be the means, he is the tormentor; much wisdom needs  
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to distinguish betwixt the evil spirit abusing the good creature, and the good creature abused by the evil spirit.

He that knew all things, asks questions, *How long hath he been so?* Not to inform himself; (that Devil could have done nothing without the knowledge, without the leave of the God of spirits;) but that by the confession of the parent he might lay forth the woful condition of the child: that the thank, and glory of the cure might be so much greater, as the complaint was more grievous; *He answered, from a child.*

O God, how I adore the depth of thy wise and just, and powerful dispensation; thou that couldst say, *I have loved Jacob, and Esau have I hated*, ere the children had done good, or evil, thoughtest also good, ere this child could be capable of good or evil, to yield him over to the power of that evil one.. What need I ask for any other reason than that, which is the rule of all justice, thy will? Yet even these weak eyes can see the just grounds of thine actions; that child, though an *Israelite*, was conceived, and born in that sin, which both could and did give Satan an interest in him: Besides, the actual sins of the parents deserv'd this revenge upon that piece of themselves. Rather, O God, let me magnify this mercy, that we, and ours escape this judgment, than question thy justice, that some escape not. How just might it have been with thee, that we, who have given way to satan in our sins, should have way and scope given to satan over us, in our punishments. It is thy praise that any of us are free; it is no quarrel that some suffer.

Do I wonder to see satan's bodily possession of this young man from a child, when I see his spiritual possession of every son of *Adam* from a longer date? Not from a child, but from the womb; yea, in it: why should not

not satan possess his own? we are all by nature the sons of wrath. It is time for us to renounce him in baptism, whose we are till we be regenerate; he hath right to us in our first birth; our new birth acquits us from him, and cuts off all his claim. How miserable are they that have nothing but nature, better had it been to have been unborn, than not to be born again.

And if this poor soul from an infant were thus miserably handled, having done no actual evil, how just cause have we to fear the like judgments, who by many foul offences have deserved to draw this executioner upon us; O my soul, thou hast not room enough for thankfulness to that good God, who hath not delivered thee up to that malignant spirit.

The distressed father sits not still, neglects not means, *I brought him to thy disciples*; doubtless the man came first to seek for Christ himself; finding him absent, he makes suit to the disciples: To whom should we have recourse in all our spiritual complaints but to the agents and messengers of God? The noise of the like cures had surely brought this man with much confidence to crave their succour; and now, how cold was he at the heart, when he found that his hopes were frustrate? They could not cast out. No doubt, the disciples tried their best; they laid their wonted charge upon this dumb spirit; but all in vain; they that could come with joy and triumph to their Master, and say, *The Devils are subject to us*, find now themselves matched with a stubborn and refractory spirit; their way was hitherto smooth and fair; they met with no rub till now; and now, surely the father of the demoniack was not more troubled at this event than themselves. How could they chuse but fear, lest their master had, with himself, withdrawn that spiritual power, which they had formerly exercised; needs must their heart fail them with their success.

The man complained not of their impotence, it were fondly injurious to accuse them for that which they

they could not do; had the want been in their will, they had well deserved a querulous language; it was no fault to want power; only he complains of the stubbornness, and laments the invincibleness of that evil spirit.

I should wrong you, O ye blessed followers of Christ, if I should say, that as *Israel* when *Moses* was gone up into the Mount, lost their belief with their guide, so that ye, missing your Master (who was now ascended up to his *Tabor*) were to seek for your faith; Rather the wisdom of God saw reason to check your over-assured forwardness, and both to pull down your hearts by a just humiliation in the sense of your own weakness, and to raise up your hearts to new acts of dependance upon that sovereign power from which your limited virtue was derived.

What was more familiar to the disciples than ejecting of devils? In this only it is denied them. Our good God sometimes finds it requisite to hold us short in these abilities, whereof we make least doubt, that we may feel whence we had them: God will be no less glorified in what we cannot do, than in what we can do; if his graces were always at our command, and ever alike, they would seem natural, and soon run into contempt; now we are justly held in an awful dependance upon that gracious hand, which so gives, as not to cloy us, and so denies as not to discourage us.

Who could now but expect that our Saviour should have pitted, and bemoaned the condition of this sad father, and miserable son, and have let fall some words of comfort upon them? Instead whereof I hear him chiding, and complaining, *O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you; how long shall I suffer you?* Complaining, not of that woful father, and more woful son: It was not his fashion to add affliction to the distressed, to break such bruised reeds; but of those scribes, who upon the failing of the



the success of this suit, had insulted upon the disability of the followers of Christ, and depraved his power, although perhaps, this impatient father, seduced by their suggestion, might slip in to some thoughts of distrust.

There could not be a greater crimination than *faithless and perverse*; faithless in not believing; perverse in being obstinately set in their unbelief; doubtless, these men were not free from other notorious crimes; all were drowned in their infidelity; moral uncleannesses, or violences may seem more heinous to men; none are so odious to God as these intellectual wickednesses

What an happy change is here in one breath of Christ, *How long shall I suffer you*; *bring him hither to me*; The one is a word of anger; the other of favour; his just indignation doth not exceed or impeach his goodness; what a sweet mixture there is in the perfect simplicity of the divine nature? In the midst of judgment he remembers mercy, yea he acts it: His sun shines in the midst of this storm; whether he frown, or whether he smile it is all to one purpose, that he may win the incredulous, and disobedient: Whither should the rigour of all our censures tend but to edification, and not to destruction? We are physicians, we are not executioners; we give purges to cure, and not poisons to kill. It is for the just judge to say one day to reprobate souls, *Depart from me*; in the mean time, it is for us, to invite all that are spiritually possessed to the participation of mercy, *Bring him hither to me*.

O Saviour, distance was no hindrance to thy work; why should the demoniack be brought to thee? Was it that this deliverance might be the better evicted; and that the beholders might see it was not for nothing that the disciples were opposed with so refractory a spirit; or was it that the scribes might be witnesses of that strong hostility, that was betwixt thee, and that foul spirit;

spirit ; and be ashamed of their blasphemous slander ?

Or was it that the father of the demoniack might be quickened in that faith, which now, through the suggestion of the scribes, begun to droop ; when he should hear and see Christ so chearfully to undertake and perform that, whereof they had bidden him despair.

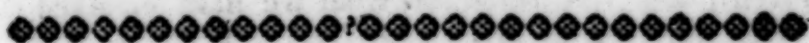
The possessed is brought ; the devil is rebuked and ejected ; that stiff spirit which stood out boldly against the commands of the disciples, cannot but stoop to the voice of the master ; that power, which did at first cast him out of heaven, easily dispossesses him of an house of clay. The Lord rebuke thee satan, and then thou canst not but flee.

The disciples, who were not used to these affronts, cannot but be troubled at their mis-success : *Master, why could not we cast him out ?* Had they been conscious of any defect in themselves, they had never ask'd the question ; little did they think to hear of their unbelief. Had they not had great faith, they could not have cast out any devils ; had they not had some want of faith they had cast out this ; it is possible for us to be defective in some graces, and not to feel it.

Although, not so much their weakness is guilty of this unprevailing, as the strength of that evil spirit ; *This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting.* Weaker spirits were wont to be ejected by a command ; this devil was more sturdy and boisterous : As there are degrees of stature in men, so there are degrees of strength, and rebellions in spiritual wickednesses. Here bidding will not serve, they must pray ; and praying will not serve, without fasting ; They must pray to God that they may prevail ; they must fast to make their prayer more fervent, more effectual : We cannot now command, we can fast and pray ; how good is our God to us, that whilst he hath not thought fit to continue to us those means which are less powerful for the dispossessing of the powers of darkness, yet hath he given us the greater.

Whilst

Whilst we can fast and pray, God will command for us ; Satan cannot prevail against us.



### XXXIV. *The W I D O W'S M I T E S.*

St. MARK xii. 41. ——— *to the End.*

**T**HE sacred wealth of the Temple was either in stuff, or in coin ; For the one, the *Jews* had an house, for the other a chest : At the concourse of all the males to the Temple thrice a year upon occasion of the solemn feasts, the oblations of both kinds were liberal : Our Saviour, as taking pleasure in the prospect, sets himself to view those offerings, whether for holy uses, or charitable.

Those things we delight in, we love to behold ; the eye and the heart will go together : And can we think, O Saviour, that thy glory hath diminished ought of thy gracious respects to our beneficence ? or that thine acceptance of our charity was confined to the earth ? Even now that thou sittest at the right hand of thy father's glory, thou seest every hand that is stretched out to the relief of thy poor saints here below ; and if vanity have power to stir up our liberality out of a conceit to be seen of men, how shall faith encourage our bounty in knowing that we are seen of thee, and accepted by thee ? Alas, what are we the better for the notice of those perishing, and impotent eyes, which can only view the outside of our actions, or for that waste wind of applause which vanisheth in the lips of the speaker ? Thine eye, O Lord, is piercing, and retributive : As to see thee is perfect happiness, so to be seen of thee is true contentment, and glory.

And dost thou, O God, see what we give thee, and not see what we take away from thee ? Are our offerings more noted than our sacrileges ? Surely, thy mercy is not more quicksighted, than thy justice ; in  
both

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both kinds our action are viewed, our account is kept, and we are sure to receive rewards for what we have given ; and vengeance for what we have defalked : With thine eye of knowledge thou seest all we do\* ; but what we do well thou seest with thine eye of approbation ; so didst thou now behold these pious and charitable oblations. How well wert thou pleased with this variety ? Thou sawest many rich men give much, and one poor widow give more than they, in lesser room.

The Jews were now under the *Roman* pressure ; they were all tributaries, yet many of them rich, and those rich men were liberal to the common chest. Hadst thou seen those many rich give little we had heard of thy censure ; thou expectest a proportion betwixt the giver and the gift, betwixt the gift and the receipt ; where that fails, the blame is just. The nation (tho' otherwise faulty enough) was in this commendable ; how bounteously open were their hands to the house of God ? Time was when their liberality was fain to be restrained by proclamation, and now it needed no incitement ; the rich gave much, the poorest gave more. *He saw a poor widow casting in two mites.* It was misery enough that she was a widow ; the married woman is under the careful provision of an husband ; if she spend, he earns ; in that estate four hands work for her ; in her viduity, but two. Poverty was added to the sorrow of her widowhood ; the loss of some husbands is supplied by a rich jointure ; it is some allay to the grief that the hand is left full, though the bed be empty ; this woman was not more desolate than needy : Yet this poor widow gives ; and what gives she ? an offering like herself, two mites ; or, in our language, two half-farthing-tokens : Alas, good woman, who was poorer than thyself ? wherefore was that Corban, but for the relief of such as thou ? who should receive if such give ? Thy mites were some-  
thing

\* Have cut or lopt off, or taken away : It is used chiefly of Money. See *Yahusa*.



thing to thee, nothing to the Treasury ; How ill is that gift bestowed, which dis-furnisheth thee, and adds nothing to the common stock , some thrifty neighbour might perhaps have suggested this probable discouragement. Jesus publisheth and applauds her bounty : *He called his disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, this woman hath cast in more than they all.* Whilst the rich put in their offerings, I see no disciples called ; it was enough that Christ noted their gifts alone ; but when the widow comes with her two mites, now the domestics of Christ are summoned to assemble, and taught to admire this munificence ; a solemn preface makes way to her praise, and her mites are made more precious, than the others talents. *She gave more than they all* ; more, not only in respect of the mind of the giver, but of the proportion of the gift, as hers : A mite to her, was more than pounds to them ; pounds were little to them ; two mites were all to her : They gave out of their abundance, she out of her necessity. That which they gave, left the heap less, yet an heap still ; she gives all at once, and leaves herself nothing. So as she gave, not more than any, but *more than they all.*

God doth not so much regard what is taken out, as what is left. O Father of mercies thou lookest at once into the bottom of her heart, and the bottom of her purse : and esteamest her gift, according to both ; as thou seest not as man, so thou valuest not as man ; man judgeth by the worth of the gift, thou judgest by the mind of the giver, and the proportion of the remainder : It were wide with us, if thou shouldst go by quantities. Alas, what have we but mites ? and those of thine own lending ? It is the comfort of our meanness, that our affections are valued, and not our presents : neither, hast thou said, God loves a liberal giver, but a chearful ; if I had more, O God, thou shouldst have it ; had I less, thou wouldst not despise it ; who acceptest the gift accord-



now, whilst the sound of betraying, suffering, dying, was in her ear, to make account of, and suit for a room in his kingdom, it argues a belief able to triumph over all discouragements.

It was nothing for the disciples, when they saw him, after his conquest of death, and rising from the grave, to ask him; Master wilt thou now restore the kingdom unto Israel? but for a silly woman to look through his future death and passion, at his resurrection and glory, it is no less worthy of wonder than praise.

To hear a man in his best health and vigour, to talk of his confidence in God, and assurance of divine favour, cannot be much worth; but, if in extremities we can believe above hope, against hope, our faith is so much more noble, as our difficulties are greater.

Never sweeter perfume arose from any altar, than that which ascended from *Job's* dung-hill, *I know that my redeemer liveth.*

What a strange style is this that is given to this woman? It had been as easy to have said, the wife of *Zebedee*, or the sister of *Mary*, or of *Joseph*, or (as her name was) plain *Salome*; but now, by an unusual description, she is styled, *The mother of Zebedee's children.* *Zebedee* was an obscure man; she, as his wife, was no better; the greatest honour she ever had, or could have, was to have two such sons as *James* and *John*; these give a title to both their parents; Honour ascends as well as descends; Holy children dignify the loins and womb from whence they proceed, no less than their parents traduce honour unto them; *Salome* might be a good wife, a good housewife, a good woman, a good neighbour; all these cannot ennoble her so much, as *the mother of Zebedee's children.*

What a world of pain, toil, care, cost, there is in the birth and education of children; their good proof requites all with advantage. Next to happiness in ourselves, is to be happy in a gracious issue.

The suit was the sons, but by the mouth of their mother, it was their best policy to speak by her lips; Ambition was not so bold in them, as to shew her own face: the envy of the suit shall thus be avoided; which could not but follow upon their personal request; if it were granted, they had what they would; if not, it was but the repulse of a woman's motion; which must needs be so much more pardonable, because it was of a mother for her sons.

It is not discommendable in parents to seek the preferment of their children; why may no *Abraham* sue for an *Ismael*? So it be by lawful means, in a moderate measure, in due order, this endeavour cannot be amiss. It is the neglect of circumstances that makes these desires sinful: Oh the madness of those parents, that care not which way they raise an house: that desire rather to leave their children great than good; that are more ambitious to have their sons Lords on earth, than Kings in heaven. Yet I commend thee *Salome*, that thy first plot was to have thy sons, Disciples of Christ, then, after, to prefer them to the best places of that attendance; it is the true method of divine prudence, O God, first to make our children happy with the honour of thy service, and then to endeavour their meet advancement upon earth.

The mother is but put upon this suit by her sons; their heart was in her lips. They were not so mortified by their continual conversation with Christ, hearing his heavenly doctrine, seeing his divine carriage, but that their minds were yet roving after temporal honours; Pride is the inmost coat which we put off last, and which we put on first: Who can wonder to see some sparks of weak and worldly desires in their holiest teachers, when the blessed Apostles were not free from some ambitious thoughts, whilst they sat at the feet, yea in the bosom of their Saviour?



*The Ambition of the two Sons of ZEBEDEE.* 195

The near kindred this woman could challenge of Christ might seem to give her just colour of more familiarity, yet now, that she comes upon a suit she submits herself to the lowest gesture of suppliants ; we need not be taught that it is fit for petitioners to the great, to present their humble supplications upon their knees. O Saviour, if this woman so nearly allied to thee according to the flesh, coming but upon a temporal occasion to thee, being, as then compassed about with human infirmities, adored thee, ere she durst sue to thee, what reverence is enough for us that come to thee upon spiritual suits, sitting now in the height of heavenly glory and majesty ? Say then, thou wife of *Zebedee*, what is it that thou cravest of thine omnipotent kinsman ? *A certain thing* ; Speak out, woman, what is this certain thing that thou cravest ? How poor and weak is this supplicatory anticipation to him, that knew thy thoughts ere thou utteredst them, ere thou entertainedst them ? We are all in this tune, every one would have something ; such perhaps, as we are ashamed to utter ; the proud man would have a certain thing ; honour in the world. The covetous would have a certain thing too ; wealth and abundance. The malicious would have a certain thing, Revenge on his enemies. The Epicure would have pleasure and long life. The barren, children. The wanton, beauty ; each one would be humoured in his own desire ; though in variety, yea contradiction to other ; though in opposition, not more to God's will, than our own good.

How this suit sticks in her teeth, and dare not freely come forth. because it is guilty of its own faultiness ? What a difference there is betwixt the prayers of faith, and the motions of self-love and infidelity ? Those come forth with boldness, as knowing their own welcome, and being well

assured both of their warrant; and acceptance; these stand blushing at the door, not daring to appear; like to some baffled suit conscious to its own unworthiness, and just repulse. Our inordinate desires are worthy of a check; when we know that our requests are holy, we cannot come with too much confidence to the throne of grace.

He that knew all their thoughts afar off, yet, as if he had been a stranger to their purposes, asks, *What wouldst thou?* Our infirmities do then best shame us, when they are fetcht out of our own mouths; Like as our prayers also serve not to acquaint God with our wants, but to make us the more capable of his mercies.

The suit is drawn from her; now she must speak. *Grant that these my two sons may sit one on thy right hand, the other on thy left, in thy kingdom.*

It is hard to say, whether out of more pride or ignorance. It was as received, as erroneous a conceit, among the very disciples of Christ, that he should raise up a temporal kingdom over the now-tributary, and enslaved people of *Israel*; The *Romans* were now their masters; their fancy was, that their *Messias* should shake off this yoke, and reduce them to their former liberty: So grounded was this opinion, that the two Disciples in their walk to *Emmans*, could say, *We trusted it had been he that should have delivered Israel*; and when, after his resurrection, he was walking up mount *Olivet*, towards heaven, his very Apostles could ask him, if he would now restore that long-expected kingdom. How should we mitigate our censures of our Christian brethren, if either they mistake, or know not some secondary truths of religion, when the domestic attendants of Christ, who heard him every day, till the very point of his ascension mis-apprehended the chief cause of his coming into the

the world, and the state of his kingdom? If our charity may not bear with small faults, what do we under his name that conniv'd at greater? Truth is as the Sun; bright in itself, yet there are many close corners into which it never shined. O God, if thou open our hearts, we shall take in those beams; till thou do so, teach us to attend patiently for ourselves, charitably for others.

These fishermen had so much courtship to know that the right hand, and the left, of any Prince, were the chief places of honour; Our Saviour had said that his twelve followers should sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of *Israel*; this good woman would have her two sons next to his person; the prime peers of his kingdom. Every one is apt to wish the best to his own: Worldly honour is neither worth our suit, nor unworthy our acceptance. Yea, *Salome*, had thy mind been in heaven, hadst thou intended this desired pre-eminence of that celestial state of glory, yet I know not how to justify thine ambition; wouldst thou have thy sons preferred to the father of the faithful, to the blessed mother of thy Saviour? That very wish were presumptuous.

For me, O God, my ambition shall go so high as to be a Saint in heaven, and to live as holily on earth as the best; but for precedency of heavenly honour, I do not, I dare not affect it; it is enough for me, if I may lift up my head amongst the heels of thy blessed ones.

The mother asks, the sons have the answer. She was but their tongue, they shall be her ears. God ever imputes the acts to the first mover, rather than to the instrument.

It was a sore check, *Ye know not what ye ask*; In our ordinary communication to speak idly, is sin; but in our suits to Christ to be so inconsiderate,

rate, as not to understand our own petitions, must needs be a foul offence.

As faith is the ground of our prayers, so knowledge is the ground of our faith ; If we come with indigested requests, we prophane that name we invoke.

To convince their unsuitness for glory, they are sent to their impotency in suffering ; *Are ye able to drink of the cup whereof I shall drink, and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized.*

O Saviour, even thou who wert one with thy Father, hast a cup of thine own ; never *potion* was so bitter as that, which was mixed for thee ; Yea, even thy draught is stinted ; it is not enough for thee to sip of this cup, thou must drink it up to the very dregs ; When the vinegar and gall were tendered to thee by men, thou didst but kiss the cup ; but when thy Father gave into thine hands a *potion* infinitely more distasteful, thou (for our health) didst drink deep of it even to the bottom, and saidst, *It is finished* : And can we repine at those unpleasing draughts of affliction, that are tempered for us sinful men, when we see thee the Son of thy Father's love, thus dieted ? We pledge thee, O blessed Saviour, we pledge thee according to our weakness, who hast begun to us in thy powerful sufferings ; Only do thou enable us (after some four faces made in our reluctance) yet at last willingly to pledge thee in our constant sufferings for thee.

As thou must be drenched within, so must thou be baptized without ; Thy baptism is not of water, but of blood ; both these came from thee in thy passion ; we cannot be thine, if we partake not of both : If thou hast not grudged thy precious blood to us, well mayst thou challenge some worthless drops from us.

When they talk of thy kingdom, thou speakest of thy bitter cup, of thy bloody baptism ; Suffering is the way to reigning ; Through many tribulations



bulations must we enter into the kingdom of heaven: There was never wedge of gold that did not first pass the fire; there was never pure grain that did not undergo the flail: In vain shall we dream of our immediate passage from the pleasures and jollity of earth to the glory of heaven. Let who will hope to walk upon roses and violets to the throne of heaven; O Saviour, let me trace thee by the track of thy blood; and by thy red steps follow thee to thine eternal rest, and happiness.

I know this is no easy task; else thou hadst never said, *Are ye able?* Who should be able if not they that had been so long blessed with thy presence; informed by thy doctrine, and (as it were) beforehand possessed of their heaven in thee? Thou hadst never made them judges of their power, if thou couldst not have convinced them of their weakness: Alas, how full of feebleness is our body, and our mind of impatience? If but a bee sting our flesh, it swells: and if but a tooth ach, the head and heart complain; How small trifles make us weary of ourselves? what can we do without thee? without thee what can we suffer? If thou be not, O Lord, strong in my weakness, I cannot be so much as weak, I cannot so much as be. Oh, do thou prepare me for my day, and enable me to my trials; I can do all things through thee that strengthenest me.

The motion of the two Disciples was not more full of infirmity, than their answer. *We are able;* out of an eager desire of the honour they are apt to undertake the condition; the best men may be mistaken in their own powers: alas, poor men, when it came to the issue, they ran away, and, I know not whither, one without his coat: It is one thing to suffer in speculation, another in practice. There cannot be a worse sign than for a man, in a carnal presumption, to vaunt of his

own abilities : How justly doth God suffer that man to be foiled purposely, that he may be ashamed of his own vain self-confidence ? O God, let me ever be humbly dejected in the sense of mine own insufficiency ; let me give all the glory to thee, and take nothing to myself but my infirmities.

Oh the wonderful mildness of the son of God ! He doth not rate the two disciples, either for their ambition in suing, or presumption in undertaking ; but, leaving the worst he takes the best of their answer ; and omitting their errors encourages their good intentions. *Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with my baptism, but to sit on my right hand, and my left, is not mine to give, but to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.* I know not whether there be more mercy in the concession, or satisfaction in the denial. Were it not an high honour to drink of thy cup, O Saviour, thou hadst not fore-promised it as a favour, I am deceived if what thou grantest were much less than that which thou deniest ; to pledge thee in thine own cup, is not much less dignity and familiarity, than to sit by thee ; if we suffer with thee, we shall also reign together with thee ; what greater promotion can flesh and blood be capable of than a conformity to the Lord of glory ; Enable thou me to drink of thy cup, and then set me where thou wilt.

But, O Saviour, while thou dignifiest them in thy grant, dost thou disparage thyself in thy denial ? *Not mine to give ?* Whose is it, if not thine ? if it be thy father's, it is thine ; thou, who art truth, hast said, *I and my Father are one* ; yea because thou art one with the Father, it is not thine to give to any save those for whom it is prepared of the father : the Father's preparation was thine, his gift is thine ; the decree of both is one ; that eternal counsel

counsel is not alterable upon our vain desires ; he father gives these heavenly honours to none but by thee ; thou givest them to none but according to the decree of thy father. Many degrees there are of celestial happiness. Those supernal mansions are not all of an height ; that providence which hath varied our stations upon earth, hath pre-ordered our seats above. O God, admit me within the walls of thy new *Jerusalem*, and place me wheresoever thou pleasest,

*XXXVI. The Tribute Money paid..**MATT. xvii. 24, to the End..*

**A**LL these other histories report the power of Christ ; this shews both his power and obedience : his power over the creature : his obedience to civil powers ; *Capernaum* was one of his own cities ; there, he made his chief abode, in *Peter's* house ; to that host of his, therefore, do the toll-gatherers repair for the tribute ; when that great disciple said, *We have left all* ; he did not say, we have abandoned all ; or sold, or given away all ; but we have left, in respect of managing, not of possession ; not in respect of right, but of use, and present fruition ; so left, that upon just occasion we may resume ; so left, that it is our due, though not our business ; doubtless, he was too wise to give away his own, that he might borrow of a stranger : his own roof gave him shelter for the time, and his master with him : of him, as the householder, is the tribute required ; and by, and for him is it also paid ; I inquire not either into the occasion, or the sum. What need we make this exaction sacrilegious ; as if that half-shekel, which was appoint-

ed by God, to be paid by every *Israelite* to the use of the tabernacle and temple, were now diverted to the *Roman* exchequer : there was no necessity that the *Roman* lords should be tied to the *Jewish* reckonings ; it was free for them to impose what payments they pleased upon a subdued people ; when great *Augustus* commanded the world to be taxed, this rate was set : the mannerly collectors demand it first of him, with whom they might be more bold ; *Doth not your Master pay tribute ?* All *Capernaum* knew Christ for a great prophet ; his doctrine had ravished them, his miracles had astonished them ; yet when it comes to a money-matter his share is as deep as the rest ; questions of profit admit no difference ; still the sacred tribe challengeth reverence ; who cares how little they receive, how much they pay ? Yet no man knows with what mind this demand was made : whether in a churlish grudging at Christ's immunity ; or in an awful compellation of the servant rather than the master.

*Peter* had it ready what to answer ; I hear him not require their stay till he should go in, and know his master resolution ; but as one well acquainted with the mind and practice of his master, he answers, *Yes*.

There was no truer pay-master of the King's dues, than he that was Kings of Kings. Well did *Peter* know, that he did not only give, but preach tribute ; when the *Herodians* laid twigs for him, as supposing that so great a Prophet would be all for the liberty, and exemption of God's chosen people, he chokes them with their own coin ; and told them the stamp argued the right, *Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's*.

O Saviour, how can thy servants challenge that freedom, which thyself had not ? who that pretends mission from thee can claim homage from those to whom thou gavest it ? If thou, by whom kings reign,  
for-



bareft not to pay tribute to an heathen prince, what power under thee can deny it to thofe that rule for thee ?

That demand was made without doors ; no fooner is *Peter* come in, than he is prevented by his mafter's queftion ; *What thinkeft thou, Simon, of whom do the kings of the earth receive tribute, of their own children, or of ftrangers ?* This very interrogation was answer enough to that which *Peter* meant to move ; he that could thus know the heart, was not, in true right, liable to human exactions.

But, O Saviour, may I presume to ask what this is to thee ? Thou haft faid, My kingdom is not of this world ; how doth it concern thee, what is done by the kings of the earth, or impofed upon the fons of earthly kings ? Thou wouldeft be the Son of a humble Virgin ; and choleft not a royal ftate, but a fervile. I difpute not thy natural right to the throne, by thy lineal defcent from the loins of *Judah* and *David*, what fhould I plead that which thou waveft ? It is thy divine royalty and fonfhip, which thou here juftly urgeft ; the argument is irrefragable and convictive ; “ If the kings of the earth do fo privilege their children that they are free from all tributes and impositions ; how much more fhall the king of heaven give this immunity to his only and natural Son ; fo, as in true reafon I might challenge an exemption for me and my train :” Thou mighteft, O Saviour ; and no lefs challenge a tribute of all the kings of the earth to thee, by whom all powers are ordained : reafon cannot mutter againft this claim, the creature owes itfelf and whatfoever it hath to the maker ; he owes nothing to it. *Then are the children free ;* He that hath right to all, needs not pay any thing ; elfe there fhould be a fubjection in fovereignty ; and men fhould be debtors to themfelves. But this right was thine own peculiar, and admits no partners ; why doft thou fpeak of children,

children, as of more ? and extending this privilege to *Peter*, sayest, *Left we scandalise them*. Was it for that thy disciples, being of thy robe, might justly seem interested in the liberties of their master ? Surely, no otherwise were they children, no otherwise free. Away with that fanatical conceit, which challenges an immunity from secular commands and taxes, to a spiritual and adoptive sonship ; no earthly faintship can exempt us from tribute to whom tribute belongeth : There is a freedom, O Saviour, which our Christianity calls us to affect ; a freedom from the yoke of sin and Satan, from the servitude of our corrupt affections, we cannot be sons if we be not thus free ; Oh free thou us by thy free spirit, from the miserable bondage of our nature, so shall the children be free : but, as from these secular duties, no man is less free than the children. O Saviour, thou wert free, and wouldst not be so ; thou wert free by natural right ; wouldst not be free by voluntary dispensation, *Left an offence might be taken* ; Surely, had there followed an offence, it had been taken only and not given. Wo be to the man by whom the offence cometh ; it cometh by him that gives it ; it cometh by him that takes it, when it is not given ; no part of this blame could have cleaved unto thee, either way ; Yet such was thy goodness, that thou wouldst not suffer an offence unjustly taken at that, which thou mightest justly have denied. How jealous should we be even of others perils ? how careful so to moderate our power in the use of lawful things, that our charity may prevent others scandals ? to remit of our own right for another's safety ? Oh the deplorable condition of those wilful men, who care not what blocks they lay in the way to heaven ! not forbearing by a known leudness to draw others into their own damnation !

To avoid the unjust offence even of very Publicans, Jesus will work a miracle. *Peter* is sent to the sea; and that not with a net, but with an hook; the Disciple was now in his own trade; He knew a net might inclose many fishes, an hook could take but one: with that hook must he go angle for the tribute-money; a fish shall bring him a stater\* in her mouth; and that fish that bites first; What an unusual bearer is here? what an unlikely element to yeild a piece of ready coin.

Oh that omnipotent power which could command the fish to be both his treasurer to keep his silver, and his purveyor to bring it! Now, whether, O Saviour, thou causedst this fish to take up that shekle out of the bottom of the sea, or whether, by thine almighty word thou madest it in an instant, in the mouth of that fish, it is neither possible to determine, nor necessary to inquire.

I rather adore thine infinite knowledge and power that couldst make use of unlikeliest means; that couldst serve thyself of the very fishes of the sea, in a business of earthly and civil imployment; It was not out of need that thou didst this (though I do not find that thou ever affectedst a full purse;) What veins of Gold, or mines of silver did not lye open to thy command? but out of a desire to teach *Peter*, that whilst he would be tributary to *Cæsar*, the very fish of the sea was tributary to him; How should this incourage our dependance upon that omnipotent hand of thine, which hath heaven, earth, sea at thy disposing; Still thou art the same for thy members, which thou wert for thyself, the head; rather than offence shall be given to the world, by a seeming neglect of thy dear children, thou wilt cause the very fowls of heaven to bring them meat, and the

\* A piece of money to pay the Tribute. See the Margin of the Bible.





a man four days dead, from, not a meer privation, but a settled corruption ; earth must needs be thine, from which thou raisest his body ; heaven must needs be thine, from whence thou fetchest his spirit : none but he that created man could thus make him new.

Sickness is the common preface to death ; no mortal nature is exempted from this complaint ; even *Lazarus*, whom Jesus loved is sick ; what can strength of grace, or dearthness of respect, prevail against disease, against dissolution.

It was a stirring message that *Mary* sent to Jesus, *He whom thou lovest is sick* ; as if she would imply, that his part was no less deep in *Lazarus* than hers. Neither doth she say, he that loves thee is sick ; but, *he whom thou lovest*, not pleading the merit of *Lazarus* his affection to Christ, but the mercy and favour of Christ to him ; even that other reflexion of love had been no weak motive ; for, O Lord, thou hast said ; *because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him* ; Thy goodness will not be behind us for love, who professeth to love them that love thee. But yet the argument is more forcible from thy love to us ; since thou hast just reason to respect every thing of thine own, more than aught that can proceed from us ; even we weak men what can we stick at where we love ? Thou, O infinite God, art love itself ; whatever thou hast done for us is out of thy love : the ground and motive of all thy mercies is within thy self, not in us, and if there be ought in us worthy of thy love, it is thine own not ours ; thou givest what thou acceptest. Jesus well heard the first groan of his dear *Lazarus* ; every short breath that he drew, every sigh that he gave was upon account ; yet this Lord of life lets his *Lazarus* sicken and languish, and dye ; not out of neglect or impotence, but out of power, and resolution ; *This sickness is not to death.*

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He, to whom the issues of death belong, knows the way both into it and out of it ; he meant that sickness should be to death, in respect of the present condition ; not to death, in respect of the event. To death in the process of nature, not to death in the success of his divine power, that the son of God might be glorified thereby. Oh Saviour, thy usual stile is the Son of man ; thou that wouldst take up our infirmities wert willing thus to hide thy godhead, under the coarse weeds of our humanity ; but here thou sayst, *That the Son of God might be glorified* ; though thou wouldst hide thy divine glory, yet thou wouldst not smother it : Sometimes thou wouldst have thy Sun break forth in bright gleams, to shew that it hath no less light, even whilst it seems kept in by the clouds : Thou wert now near thy passion ; it was most seasonable for thee at this time to set forth thy just title ; neither was this an act, that thy humanity could challenge to itself, but far transcending all finite power ; to dye was an act of the Son of man, to raise from death was an act of the Son of God.

Neither didst thou say merely, that God, but, *that the Son of God might be glorified* ; God cannot be glorified unless the Son be so. In very natural relations the wrong or disrespect offered to the child reflects upon the father, as contrarily the parents upon the child ; how much more, where the love and respect is infinite ? where the whole essence is communicated with the entireness of relation ?

O God, in vain shall we tender our devotions to thee, indefinitely, as to a glorious, and incomprehensible majesty, if we kiss not the Son who hath most justly said, Ye believe in the Father, believe also in me.

What an happy family was this ? I find none upon earth so much honoured ; *Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus* ; it is no standing upon terms of precedency ; the spirit of God is not curious in mar-

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shallings of places ; time was when *Mary* was confessed to have chosen the better part : here *Martha* is named first, as most interested in Christ's love ; for ought appears all of them were equally dear ; Christ had familiarly lodged under their roof ; how fit was that to receive him, whose indwellers were hospitable, pious, unanimous ? Hospitable in the glad entertainment of Jesus, and his train ; pious in their devotions ; unanimous in their mutual concord ; as contrarily he balks and hates that house, which is taken up with uncharitableness, profaneness, contention.

But, O Saviour, how doth this agree ; thou lovedst this family ; yet hearing of their distress, thou heldest off two days more from them ? Canst thou love those thou regardest not ? canst thou regard them from whom thou willingly absentest thyself in their necessity ? Behold, thy love as it is above ours ; so it is oft against ours ; Even out of very affection art thou, not seldom, absent ? None of thine, but have sometimes cried, *How long, Lord ?* What need we instance, when thine eternal Father did purposely estrange his face from thee, so as thou cryedst out of forsaking.

Here thou wouldst knowingly delay, whether for the greatning of the miracle, or for the strengthening of thy disciples faith.

Hadst thou gone sooner, and prevented the death, who had known whether strength of nature, and not thy miraculous power had done it ? hadst thou overtaken his death by this quickning visitation, who had known whether this had been only some qualm, or extasy, and not a perfect dissolution ? now this large gap of time makes thy work both certain and glorious.

And what a clear proof was this before hand to thy disciples, that thou wert able to accomplish thine own resurrection on the third day, who wert able to raise up *Lazarus* on the fourth ? The more difficult the work should be, the more need it had of an omnipotent confirmation.

He.

He that was Lord of our times and his own, can now, when he found it seasonable, say, *Let us go into Judea again* ; why left he it before ? was it not upon the heady violence of his enemies ? Lo, the stones of the Jews drove him thence, the love of *Lazarus*, and the care of his divine glory drew him back thither.

We may, we must be wise as serpents, for our own preservation ; we must be careless of danger, when God calls us to the hazard ; It is far from God's purpose to give us leave so far to respect ourselves, as that we should neglect him ? Let Judea be all snares, all crosses, O Saviour, when thou callest us we must put our lives into our hands, and follow thee thither.

This journey thou hast purposed, and contrived, but what needest thou to acquaint thy disciples with thine intent ? Where didst thou ever (besides this) make them of counsel with thy voyages ? Neither didst thou say, How think you, if I go ; but, *Let us go* ; was it for that thou who knewest thine own strength, knewest also their weakness ? thou wert resolute, they were timorous ; they were sensible enough of their late peril, and fearful of more ; there was need to fore arm them with an expectation of the worst and preparation for it ; Surprisal, with evils may endanger the best constancy : The heart is apt to fail, when it finds itself intrapped in a sudden mischief.

The disciples were dearly affected to *Lazarus* ; they had learned to love where their master loved ; yet now when our Saviour speaks of returning to that region of peril, they pull him by the steeve, and put him in mind of the violence offered unto him, *master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again.*

No less than thrice in the foregoing Chapter, did the Jews lift up their hands to murder him, by a cruel lapidation ; whence was this rage and bloody attempt of theirs ? Only for that he taught them the truth concerning his divine nature ; and gave himself the  
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just stile of the Son of God; How subject carnal hearts are to be impatient of heavenly verities? Nothing can so much fret that malignant spirit, which rules in those breasts, as that Christ should have his own. If we be persecuted for his truth, we do but suffer with him, with whom we shall once reign.

However the disciples pleaded for their Master's safety, yet they aimed at their own; they well knew their danger was inwrapped in his. It is but a cleanly colour, that they put upon their own fear; this is held but a weak and base passion; each one would be glad to put off the opinion of it from himself; and to set the best face upon his own impotency.

Thus faint hearted men that shrink and shift from the cross, will not want fair pretences to evade it. One pleads the peril of many dependants; another, the disfurnishing the Church of succeeding abettors; each will have some plausible excuse for his sound skin: What error did not our Saviour rectify in his followers? Even that fear which they would have dissembled, is graciously dispelled by the just consideration of a sure, and inevitable providence; "Are there not twelve hours in the day, said he, which are duly set, and proceed regularly for the direction of all the motions and actions of men; So in this course of mine, which I must run on earth, there is a set, and determined time, wherein I must work, and do my Father's will; The Sun, that guides these hours, is the determinate counsel of my Father, and his calling to the execution of my charge; whilst I follow that, I cannot miscarry; no more than a man can miss his known way at high noon; this while," in vain are either your dissuasions, or the attempts of enemies; they cannot hurt, ye cannot divert me."

The journey then holds to Jude; his attendants shall be made acquainted with the occasion: He that had formerly denied the deadliness of *Lazarus* his sickness, would not suddenly confess his death; nei-

e i. e. during this time, — while this lasts.

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ther yet would he altogether conceal it ; so will he there fore confess it, as that he will shadow it out in a borrowed expression ; *Lazarus, our friend, sleepeth* ; what a sweet title is here both of death and of *Lazarus* ? Death is asleep, *Lazarus* is our friend ; Lo ; he says not my friend but ours ; to draw them first into a gracious familiarity, and communion of friendship with himself, for what doth this import, but, *Ye are my friends*, and *Lazarus* is both my friend and yours. *Our friend.*

Oh meek and merciful Saviour, that disdainest not to stoop so low ; as that whilst thou thoughtest it no robbery to be equal unto God, thou thoughtest it no disparagement to match thyself with weak and wretched men ; our friend *Lazarus* ! There is a kind of parity in friendship ; there may be love where is the most inequality ; but friendship supposes pairs, yet the son of God says of the sons of men, our friend *Lazarus*. Oh what an high and happy condition is this for mortal men to aspire unto, that the God of heaven should not be ashamed to own them for friends. Neither saith he now, abruptly, *Lazarus* our friend is dead, but *Lazarus our friend sleepeth*.

O Saviour, none can know the estate of life or death so well, as thou that art the Lord of both ; it is enough that thou tellest us death is no other than sleep ; that which was wont to pass for the cozen of death is now Death itself ; All this while we have mistaken the case of our dissolution ; we took it for an enemy, it proves a friend ; there is pleasure in that wherein we supposed horror.

Who is afraid after the weary toils of the day, to take his rest by night ? or what is more refreshing to the spent traveller, than a sweet sleep ? It is our infidelity, our im preparation that makes death any other than advantage.

Even so, Lord, when thou seeest I have toiled enough, let me sleep in peace, and when thou seeest I have slept enough, Awake me, as thou didst thy *Laza-*

rus ; but I go to awake him ; thou saidst not ; Let us go to awake him ; those whom thou wilt allow companions of thy way, thou wilt not allow partners of thy work ; they may be witnesses, they cannot be actors ; none can awake *Lazarus* out of this sleep, but he that made *Lazarus* : Every mouse or gnat can raise us up from that other sleep, none but an omnipotent power from this ; this sleep is not without a dissolution ; who can command the soul to come down, and meet the body, or command the body to piece with itself, and rise up to the soul, but the God that created both ? It is our comfort and assurance, O Lord, against the terrors of death, and tenacity of the grave, that our resurrection depends upon none, but thine omnipotence.

Who can blame the Disciples if they were loath to return to Judea ; their last entertainment was such, as might justly dishearten them : were this (as literally taken) all the reason of our Saviour's purpose of so perilous a voyage, they argued not amiss ; *If he sleep he shall do well.* Sleep in sickness is a good sign of recovery ; for extremity of pain bars our rest ; when nature therefore finds so much respiration, she justly hopes for better terms ; yet it doth not always follow, *If he sleep he shall do well.* How many have died in lethargies ! How many have lost in sleep what they would not have forgone waking ? *Adam* slept and lost his rib : *Sampson* slept and lost his strength ; *Saul* slept, and lost his weapon ; *Isaboth* and *Holofernes* slept and lost their heads. In ordinary course it holds well ; here they mistook and erred ; the misconstruction of the words of Christ led them into an unseasonable, and erroneous suggestion. Nothing can be more dangerous than to take the speeches of Christ according to the sound of the letter ; one error will be sure to draw on more ; and if the first be never so slight, the last may be important.

Wherefore are words but to express meanings ?  
 † why

why do we speak, but to be understood? Since then our Saviour saw himself not rightly construed, he delivers himself plainly; *Lazarus is dead*. Such is thy manner; O thou eternal word of thy Father, in all thy sacred expressions; thine own mouth is thy best commentary, what thou hast more obscurely said in one passage, thou interpretest more clearly in another; thou art the sun which givest us that light whereby we see thyself.

But how modestly dost thou discover thy deity to thy disciples? not upon the first mention of *Lazarus* his death instantly professing thy power, and will of his resurrection; \* but contenting thyself only to intimate the omniscience, in that thou couldst, in that absence and distance know, and report his departure; they shall gather the rest, and cannot chuse but think, we serve a master that knows all things, and he that knows all things, can do all things.

The absence of our Saviour from the death-bed of *Lazarus*, was not casual but voluntary; yea, he is not only willing with it, but glad of it; *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there*. How contrary may the affections of Christ and ours be, and yet be both good? The two worthy sisters were much grieved at our Saviour's absence, as doubting it might favour of some neglect; Christ was glad of it, for the advantage of his Disciples faith; I cannot blame them that they were thus sorry; I cannot but bless him that he was thus glad; the gain of their faith in so divine a miracle, was more than could be countervailed by their momentary sorrow. God and we are not alike affected with the same events; He laughs where we mourn; he is angry where we are pleased.

The difference of the affections arises from the difference of the objects, which Christ and they apprehend in the same occurrence. Why are the sisters sorrowful? because upon Christ's absence *Lazarus* died; Why was Jesus glad he was not there? for the

\* Raising again, Resurrection.



the benefit which he saw would accrue to their faith: There is much variety of prospect in every act, according to the several intentions and issues thereof, yea even in the very same eyes; the father sees his son combating in a duel for his country; he sees blows and wounds on the one side; he sees renown and victory on the other; he grieves at the wounds, he rejoices in the honour. Thus doth God in all our afflictions, he sees our tears, and hears our groans, and pities us; but withall, he looks upon our patience, our faith, our crown, and is glad that we are afflicted.

O God, why should not we conform our diet unto thine? when we lie in pain and extremity, we cannot but droop under it; but do we find ourselves increased in true mortification, in patience, in hope, in a constant reliance on thy mercies, why are we not more joyed in this, than dejected with the other? since the least grain of the increase of grace is more worth than can be equalled with whole pounds of bodily vexation.

O strange consequence! *Lazarus* is dead, nevertheless, let us go unto him; must they not needs think, what should we do with a dead man? What should separate, if death cannot? Even those whom we loved dearest, we avoid once dead; now we lay them aside under the board; and thence, send them out of our houses to their grave; neither hath death more horror in it than noisomeness; and if we could intreat our eyes to indure the horrid aspect of death, in the face we loved, yet, can we perswade our scent to like that smell that arises up from their corruption? O love stronger than death! Behold here a friend, whom the very grave cannot sever.

Even those that write the longest and more passionate dates of their amity, subscribe, but your friend till death; and if the ordinary strain of human friendship will stretch yet a little further, it is but to the  
brim



hopes in them : *Martha* was ever the more active ; she, that was before so busily stirring in her house to entertain *Jesus*, was now as nimble to go forth of her house to meet him ; She in whose face joy had wont to smile upon so blessed a guest, now salutes him with the signs, and tears, of a disconsolate mourner ; I know not whether the speeches of her greeting had in them more sorrow, or religion : She had been well catechized before ; even she also had sat at *Jesus* his feet, and can now give good account of her faith, in the power and godhead of *Christ*, in the certainty of a future resurrection ; this conference hath yet taught her more, and raised her heart to an expectation of some wonderful effect. And now she stands not still, but hastes back into the village to her sister ; carried thither by the two wings of her own hopes, and her Saviour's commands ; the time was, when she would have called off her sister from the feet of that divine Master, to attend the household occasions ; now she runs to fetch her out of the house to the feet of *Christ*.

Doubtless, *Martha* was much affected with the presence of *Christ* ; and as she was overjoyed with it herself, so she knew how equally welcome it would be to her sister ; yet she doth not ring it out aloud in the open hall, but secretly whispers this pleasing tidings in her sister's ear, *The Master is come and calleth for thee.* Whether out of modesty or discretion, it is not fit for a woman to be loud and clamorous ; nothing befits that sex better than silence, and bashfulness ; as not to be too much seen, so not to be heard too far ; Neither did modesty more charm her tongue than discretion ; whether in respect to the guests or to *Christ* himself. Had those guests heard of *Christ*'s being there, they had either out of fear or prejudice withdrawn themselves from him ; neither durst they have been witnesses of that wonderful miracle, as being over-awed with that Jewish edict, which was

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out against him, or perhaps they had with-held the sisters from going to him, against whom they knew how highly their governors were incensed; neither was she ignorant of the danger of his own person; so lately before assaulted violently by his enemies at *Jerusalem*; she knew they were within the smoak of that bloody city, the nest of his enemies; she holds it not therefore fit, to make open proclamation of Christ's presence, but rounds her sister secretly in the ear. Christianity doth not bid us abate any thing of our wariness, and honest policies; yea it requires us to have no less of the serpent, than of the dove.

There is a time, when we must preach Christ on the house top, there is a time when we must speak him in the ear, and (as it were) with our lips shut. Secrecy hath no less use than divulgation. She said enough. *The Master is come and calleth for thee*; What an happy word was this which was here spoken? what an high favour is this that is done? that the Lord of life should personally come, and call for *Mary*; yet such, as is not appropriated to her; thou comest to us still, O Saviour, if not in thy bodily presence, yet in thy spiritual; thou callest us still, if not in thy personal voice, yet in thy ordinances; it is our fault if we do not as this good woman, arise quickly, and come to thee; her friends were there about her, who came purposely to condole with her; her heart was full of heaviness; yet so soon as she hears mention of Christ, she forgets friends, brother, grief, cares, thoughts, and hastes to his presence.

Still was Jesus standing in the place where *Martha* left him; Whether it be noted to express *Mary's* speed, or his own wise and gracious resolutions; his presence in the village had perhaps invited danger, and set off the intended witnesses of the work; or it may be to set forth his zealous desire to dispatch the errand he came for; that as *Abraham's* faithful servant would not receive any curtesy from the house of *Bethuel*, till he



had done his Master's business concerning *Rebecca*, so thou, O Saviour, wouldst not so much as enter into the house of these two sisters, in *Bethany*, till thou hadst effected this glorious work, which occasioned thee thither: It was thy meat and drink to do the will of thy father, thy best entertainment was within thyself: how do we follow thee, if we suffer either pleasures or profits to take the wall of thy services?

So good women were well worthy of kind friends: no doubt *Bethany*, being not two miles distant from *Jerusalem*, could not but be furnished with good acquaintance from the city; these knowing the dearness, and hearing of the death of *Lazarus*, came over to comfort the sad sisters. Charity, together with the common practice of that nation, calls them to this duty: All our distresses expect these good offices from those that love us; but of all others, death, as that which is the extremest of evils, and makes the most fearful havock in families, cities, kingdoms, worlds; the complaint was grievous, *I looked for some to comfort me. but there was none*; it is some kind of ease to sorrow to have partners; as a burden is lightened by many shoulders; or as clouds scattered into many drops, easily vent their moisture into air; yea the very presence of friends abates grief: The peril that arises to the heart from passion is the fixedness of it, when, like a corrosive plaster, it eats into the sore; some kind of remedy it is, that it may breath out in good society.

These friendly neighbours, seeing *Mary* hasten forth, make haste to follow her; *Martha* went forth before, I saw none go after her; *Mary* stirs, they are at her heels; was it for that *Martha* being the elder sister, and the housewife of the family, might stir about with less observation? or was it, that *Mary* was the more passionate, and needed the more heedly attendance? However, their care and intentiveness is truly commendable; they came to comfort her, they

do what they came for. It contents them not to sit still, and chat within doors, but they wait on her at all turns; perturbations of mind are diseases; good keepers do not only tend the patient in bed, but when he sits up, when he tries to walk, all his motions have their careful assistance. We are no true friends, if our endeavours of the redress of distempers in them we love, be not assiduous, and unweariable.

It was but a loving suspicion, *she is gone to the grave to weep there.* They well knew how apt passionate minds are to take all occasions to renew their sorrow; every object affects them; when she saw but the chamber of her dead brother, straight she thinks there was *Lazarus* wont to lie, and then she wept afresh; when the table, there *Lazarus* was wont to sit; and then new tears arise; when the garden, there *Lazarus* had wont to walk, and now again she weeps; how much more do these friends suppose the passions would be stirred, with the sight of the grave, when she must needs think, there is *Lazarus*. O Saviour, if the place of the very dead corpse of our friend have power to draw our hearts thither, and to affect us more deeply; how should our hearts be drawn to, and affected with heaven, where thou sittest at the right hand of thy father, there (O thou which wert dead, and art alive) is thy body, and thy soul present; and united to thy glorious deity; thither, O thither, let our access be; not to mourn there (where is no place for sorrow) but to rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious; and more and more, to long, for that thy beatifical presence.

Their indulgent love mistook *Mary's* errand; their thoughts (how kind soever) were much too low: while they supposed she went to a dead brother she went to a living Saviour. The world hath other conceits of the actions, and carriage of the regenerate than are truly intended; setting such constructions upon them, as their own carnal reasons suggests; they

they think them dying, when behold they live ; sorrowful when they are always rejoicing ; poor while they make many rich ; how justly do we appeal from them as incompetent judges and pity those misinterpretations, which we cannot avoid.

Both the sisters met Christ ; not both in one posture, *Mary* is still noted as for more passion, so for more devotion ; she that before sat at the feet of Jesus, now falls at his feet : That presence had wont to be familiar to her and not without some outward homeliness ; now, it fetches her upon her knees, in an awful veneration ; whether out of a reverent acknowledgment of the secret excellency, and power of Christ ; or out of a dumb intimation of that suit concerning her dead brother, which she was afraid to utter ; the very gesture itself was supplicatory : what position of body can be so fit for us, when we make our address to our Saviour : It is an irreligious unmannerliness for us to do less. Where the heart is affected with an awful acknowledgment of Majesty, the body cannot but bow.

Even before all her neighbours of *Jerusalem*, doth *Mary* thus fall down at the feet of Jesus ; so many witnesses as she had, so many spies she had of that forbidden observance ; it was no less than excommunication for any body to confess him ; yet, good *Mary* not fearing the informations that might be given by those Jewish gossips, adores him ; and in her silent gesture says, as much as her sister had spoken before, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of God* : Those that would give Christ his right, must not stand upon scrupulous fears. Are we naturally timorous ? why do we not fear the denial, the exclusion of the Almighty ? without shall be the fearful.

Her humble prostration is seconded by a lamentable complaint ; *Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died* ; the sisters are both in one mind, both in one speech, and both of them in one speech be-

wray both strength and infirmity; strength of faith in ascribing so much power to Christ, that his presence could preserve from death; infirmity, in supposing the necessity of a presence for this purpose. Why *Mary*, could not thine omnipotent Saviour, as well in absence, have commanded *Lazarus* to live? is his hand so short, that he can do nothing but by contraction? if his power was finite, how could he have forbidden the seizure of death; if infinite, how could it be limited to place, or hindered by distance? It is a weakness of faith to measure success by means, and means by presence; and to tie effects to both, when we deal with an almighty agent. Finite causes work within their own sphere; all places are equally near, and all effects equally easy to the infinite. O Saviour, whilst thou now sittest gloriously in heaven, thou dost no less impart thyself unto us, than if thou stoodst visibly by us, than if we stood locally by thee: no place can make difference of thy virtue and aid.

This was *Mary's* moan; no motion, no request sounded from her to her saviour; her silent suit is returned with a mute answer; no notice is taken of her error; O that marvellous mercy that connives at our faulty infirmities: All the reply that I hear of, is, a compassionate groan within himself. O blessed Jesu, thou that wert free from all sin, wouldst not be free even from strong affections; wisdom and holiness should want much work, if even vehement passions might not be quitted from offence. *Mary* wept, her tears drew on tears from her friends, all their tears united drew groans from thee; even in thine heaven, thou dost no less pity our sorrows; thy glory is free from groans, but abounds with compassion and mercy; if we be not sparing of our tears, thou canst not be insensible of our sorrows; how shall we imitate thee, if, like our looking glass, we do not answer tears, and weep on them that weep upon us?

Lord,



Lord, thou knewest (in absence) that *Lazarus* was dead, and dost thou not know where he was buried? Surely, thou wert further off when thou sawedst and reportedst his death, than thou wert from the grave thou inquiredst of; thou that knewest all things, yet askedst what thou knowest, *Where have ye laid him?* Not out of need, but out of will: That, as in thy sorrow, so in thy question thou mightest depress thyself in the opinion of the beholders, for the time, that the glory of thine instant miracle might be the greater, the less it was expected. It had been all one to thy omnipotence, to have made a new *Lazarus* out of nothing: or in that remoteness to have commanded *Lazarus*, wheresoever he was, to come forth; but thou wert neither willing to work more miracles than was requisite, nor yet unwilling to fix the minds of the people upon the expectation of some marvellous thing, that thou meantest to work; and therefore askedst, *Where have you laid him?*

They are not more glad of the question, than ready for the answer; *Come and see?* It was the manner of the Jews, as likewise of those *Ægyptians*, among whom they had sojourned, to lay up the dead bodies of their friends with great respect; more cost was wont to be bestowed on some of their graves, than on their houses; as neither ashamed then, nor unwilling to show the decency of their sepulchre, they say, *Come and see*: more was hoped for from Christ, than a mere view, they meant and expected that his eye should draw him on to some further action: O Saviour, while we desire our spiritual resurrection, how should we labour to bring thee to our grave; how should we lay open our deadness before thee; and bewray to thee our impotence and senselessness. Come Lord, and see what a miserable carcass I am; and by the power of thy mercy raise me from the state of my corruption.

Never was our saviour more submissively dejected, than now immediately before he would approve and exalt the majesty of his godhead; to his groans, and inward grief, he adds his tears; anon, they shall confess him a God; these expressions of passions shall onwards evince him to be a man; the Jews construe this well; *See how he loved him*; never did any thing but love fetch tears from Christ; but they do foully misconstrue Christ in the other; *Could not he that opened the eyes of him that was born blind, have caused that even this man should not have died*; yes, know ye, O vain and importune questionists, that he could have done it with ease; to open the eyes of a man born blind, was more than to keep a sick man from dying; this were but to uphold and maintain nature from decaying; that were to create a new sense, and to restore a deficiency in nature; to make an eye, was no whit less difficult than to make a man; he that could do the greater might well have done the less. Ye shall soon see this was not for want of power. Had ye said, why would he not, why did he not; the question had been fairer, and the answer no less easy; For his own greater glory. Little do ye know the drift whether of God's acts or delays; and ye know as much as you are worthy: Let it be sufficient for you to understand that he who can do all things, will do that which shall be most for his own honour.

It is not improbable that Jesus, who before groaned in himself, for compassion of their tears, now groaned for their incredulity; nothing could so much afflict the Saviour of men, as the sins of men; could their external wrongs to his body have been separated from offence against his divine person, their scornful indignities had not so much affected him; no injury goes so deep as our spiritual provocations of our God: Wretched men, why should we grieve the good spirit of God in us? why should we make him groan for us that died to redeem us.

With

With these groans, O Saviour, thou camest to the grave of *Lazarus*: The door of that house of death was strong and impenetrable; thy first word was, *Take away the stone*; O weak beginning of a mighty miracle! If thou meantest to raise the dead, how much more easy had it been for thee to remove the grave-stone? One grain of faith in thy very disciples was enough to remove mountains; and dost thou say, *Take away the stone*? I wist, there was a greater weight, that lay upon the body of *Lazarus*, than the stone of his Tomb; the weight of death, and corruption; a thousand rocks and hills were not so heavy a load as this alone, why then dost thou stick at this shovelfull? Yea, how easy had it been for thee to have brought up the body of *Lazarus* through the stone, by causing that marble to give way by a sudden rarefaction. But thou thoughtest best to make use of their hands rather; whether for their own more full conviction; for had the stone been taken away by thy followers, and *Lazarus* thereupon walked forth, this might have appeared to thy malignant enemies, to have been a set match betwixt thee, the disciples, and *Lazarus*; or, whether, for the exercise of our faith, that thou mightest teach us to trust thee under contrary appearances: Thy command to remove the stone, seemed to argue an impotence; straight that seeming weakness breaks forth into an act of omnipotent power; the homeliest shows of thine human infirmity are ever seconded with some mighty proofs of thy godhead, and thy miracle is so much more wondred at, by how much it was less expected.

It was ever thy just will that we should do what we may; to remove the stone, or to untie the napkin, was in their power; this they must do; to raise the dead was out of their power, this therefore thou wilt do alone; our hands must do their utmost, ere thou wilt put to thine.

O Saviour we are all dead and buried in the grave of our sinful nature; the stone of obstination must be taken away from our hearts, ere we can hear thy reviving voice; we can no more remove this stone, than dead *Lazarus* could remove his; we can add more weight to our graves; O let thy faithful agents by the power of thy law, and the grace of thy gospel take off the stone, that thy voice may enter into the grave of miserable corruption.

Was it a modest kind of mannerliness in *Martha*, that she would not have Christ annoyed with the ill scent of that stale carcass? or was it out of distrust of reparation, since her brother had passed all the degrees of corruption, that she says, *Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days?* He that understood hearts, found somewhat amiss in that intimation; his answer had not endeavoured to rectify that which was utterly faultless. I fear the good woman meant to object this as a likely obstacle to any further purposes, or proceedings of Christ; weak faith is still apt to lay blocks of difficulties in the way of the great works of God.

Four days were enough to make any corpse noisome; death itself is not unsavory; immediately upon dissolution the body retains the wonted sweetness; it is the continuance under death that is thus offensive; neither is it otherwise in our spiritual condition: the longer we lie under our sin, the more rotten and corrupt we are; he who upon the fresh commission of his sin, recovers himself by a speedy repentance, yields no ill scent to the nostrils of the almighty; the candle that is presently blown in again offends not; it is the snuff which continues choaked with its own moisture, that sends up unwholesome and odious fumes. O Saviour, thou wouldst yeild to death, thou wouldst not yeild to corruption, ere the fourth day thou wert risen again; I cannot but receive many deadly foils; but  
oh,



oh, do thou raise me up again, ere I shall pass the degrees of rottenness in my sins and trespasses.

They that laid their hands to the stone, doubtless held now still awhile, and looked one while on Christ, another while upon *Martha*, to hear what issue of resolution would follow upon so important an objection; when they find a light touch of taxation, to *Martha*, Said not I to thee, that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God? that holy woman had before professed her belief, as Christ had professed his great intentions; both were now forgotten, and now our Saviour is fain to revive both her memory and faith; Said not I to thee? The best of all Saints are subject to fits of unbelief, and oblivion; the only remedy whereof must be the inculcation of God's merciful promises of their relief and supportation; O God, if thou have said it, I dare believe, I dare cast my soul upon the belief of every word of thine; Faithful art thou which hast promised, who wilt also do it.

In spite of all the unjust discouragements of nature, we must obey Christ's command: Whatever *Martha* suggests, they remove the stone, and may now see, and smell him dead, whom they shall soon see revived; the scent of the corpse is not so unpleasing to them, as the perfume of their obedience is sweet to Christ; and now when all impediments are removed, and all hearts ready for the work, our Saviour addresses to the miracle.

His eyes begin, they are lift up to heaven; it was the malicious suggestion of his enemies, that he look'd down to *Beelzebub*: the beholders shall now see, whence he expects and derives his power, and shall, by him learn, whence to expect, and hope for all success. The heart and the eye must go together; he that would have ought to do with God, must be sequestred, and lifted up from earth.

His tongue seconds his eye; *Father*; nothing more stuck in the stomach of the *Jews*, than that Christ called himself the son of God; this was imputed to him for a blasphemy worthy of stones; how seasonably is this word spoken, in the hearing of these *Jews*, in whose sight he will be presently approved for? How can ye now, O ye cavillers, except at that title, which ye shall see irrefragably justified? Well may he call God Father, that can raise the dead out of the grave: In vain shall ye snarl at the stile when ye are convinced of the effect.

I hear of no prayer, but a thanks for hearings; whilst thou saidst nothing, O Saviour, how doth thy Father hear thee? Was it not with thy father and thee, as it was with thee and *Moses*; thou saidst, let me alone *Moses*, when he spake not? Thy will was thy prayer; words express our hearts to men, thoughts to God; well didst thou know, out of the self-same-ness of thy will with thy father's, that if thou didst but think in thine heart that *Lazarus* should rise, he was now raised. It was not for thee to pray vocally, and audibly\*, lest those captious hearers should say, thou didst all by intreaty, nothing by power: thy thanks overtake thy desires, ours require time and distance, our thanks arise from the echo of our prayers, resounding from heaven to our hearts; thou, because thou art at once in earth and heaven, and knowest the grant to be of equal paces, with the request, most justly thankest in praying.

Now the cavilling *Jews* are thinking straight, is there such distance betwixt the Father and the Son? is it so rare a thing for the son to be heard, that he pours out his thanks for it, as a blessing unusual? Do ye not now see that he who made your heart, knows it; and anticipates your fond thoughts, with the same breath, *I knew that thou hearest me always; but I said this for their sakes, that they might believe.*

Merciful

\* To be heard.

Merciful Saviour, how can we enough admire thy goodness, who makest our belief the scope and drift of thy doctrine and actions! Alas, what wert thou the better, if they believed thee sent from God; what wert thou the worse if they believed it not? Thy perfection and glory stands not upon the slippery terms of our approbation, or dislike; but is real in thyself, and that infinite, without possibility of our increase or diminution; we, we only are they that have either the gain or loss in thy receipt, or rejection, yet so dost thou affect our belief, as if it were more thine advantage than ours.

O Saviour, whilst thou spakest to thy Father, thou liftedst up thine eyes; now thou art to speak unto dead *Lazarus*, thou liftedst up thy voice, and criedst aloud, *Lazarus come forth*; was it that the strength of the voice might answer to the strength of the affection? since we faintly require what we care not to obtain, and vehemently utter what we earnestly desire? Was it that the greatness of the voice might answer to the greatness of the work? Was it that the hearers might be witnesses of what words were used in so miraculous an act; no magical incantations, but authoritative and divine commands? Was it to signify that *Lazarus* his soul was called from far; the speech must be loud that shall be heard in another world? Was it in relation to the estate of the body of *Lazarus*, whom thou hadst reported to sleep; since those that are in a deep and dead sleep cannot be awaked, without a loud call: Or, was it in a representation of that loud voice of the last trumpet, which shall sound into all graves, and raise all flesh from their dust.

Even so still, Lord, when thou wouldst raise a soul from the death of sin, and grave of corruption, no easy voice will serve. Thy strongest commands, thy loudest denuntiatiions of judgments, the shrillest and sweetest promulgations of thy mercies are but enough.

How

How familiar a word is this, *Lazarus come forth*? no other than he was wont to use whilst they lived together, neither doth he say, *Lazarus revive*, but, as if he supposed him already living, *Lazarus come forth*; to let them know, that those who are dead to us, are to and with him, alive; yea, in a more entire and feeling society, than whilst they carried their clay about them. Why do I fear that separation, which shall more unite me to my Saviour?

Neither was the word more familiar than commanding, *Lazarus come forth*; Here is no suit to his Father; no adjuration to the deceased, but a flat and absolute injunction, *Come forth*; O Saviour, that is the voice that I shall once hear sounding into the bottom of my grave, and raising me up out of my dust; that is the voice that shall pierce the rocks, and divide the mountains, and fetch up the dead out of the lowest deeps: Thy word made all, thy word shall repair all: hence, all ye diffident fears, —he, whom I trust, is omnipotent!

It was the *Jewish* fashion to enwrap the corpse in linen, to tie the hands and feet, and to cover the face of the dead; the fall of man (besides weakness) brought shame upon him; ever since, even whilst he lives, the whole body is covered; but the face, because some sparks of that extinct majesty remain there, is wont to be left open; in death (all those poor remainders being gone, and leaving deformity and ghastliness in the room of them) the face is covered also.

There lies *Lazarus* bound in double fetters; One almighty word hath loosed both, and now he that was bound came forth; he whose power could not be hindered by the chains of death, cannot be hindered by linen bonds: He that gave life, gave motion, gave direction: He that guided the soul of *Lazarus* into the body, guided the body of *Lazarus* without his eyes, moved the feet without the full liberty of his regular paces; no doubt the same power slackned those swathing bands of death, that the feet might have

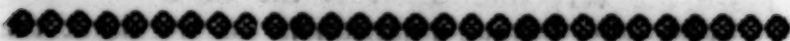


have some little scope to move, though not with that freedom that followed after: Thou didst not only, O Saviour, raise the body of *Lazarus*, but the faith of the beholders. They cannot deny him dead, whom they saw rising; they see the signs of death with the proofs of life: Those very swaths convinced him to be the man that was raised; thy less miracle confirms the greater, both confirms the faith of the beholders. O clear and irrefragable example of our resurrection: Say now ye shameless *Sadduces*, with what face can ye deny the resurrection of the body, when ye see *Lazarus*, after four days death, rising up out of his grave; and if *Lazarus* did thus start up, at the bleating of this lamb of God, that was now every day preparing for the slaughter house, how shall the dead be roused up out of their graves, by the roaring of that glorious and immortal lion, whose voice shall shake the powers of heaven, and move the very foundations of the earth?

With what strange amazedness do we think that *Martha* and *Mary*, the *Jews* and the disciples look to see *Lazarus* come forth in his winding sheet, shackled with his linen fetters, and walk towards them? Doubtless fear and horror strove in them, whether should be for the time more predominant: We love our friends dearly, but to see them again after their known death, and that in the very robes of the grave, must needs set up the hair in a kind of uncouth rigour: and now, tho' it had been most easy for him that brake the adamantine fetters of death, to have broke in pieces those linen ligaments, where-with his raised *Lazarus* was encumbered; yet he will not do it, but by their hands: He that said, *Remove the stone*, said, *Loose Lazarus*; he will not have us expect his immediate help in that we can do for ourselves. It is both a laziness, and a presumptuous tempting of God, to look for an extraordinary and super-

supernatural help from God, where he hath enabled us with common aid.

What strange salutations do we think there were betwixt *Lazarus* and Christ that had raised him ; betwixt *Lazarus* and his sisters, and neighbours and friends ? what amazed looks ? what unusual complements ? for, *Lazarus* was himself at once ; here was no leisure of degrees to reduce him to his wonted perfection ; neither did he stay to rub his eyes and stretch his benumbed limbs ; nor take time to put off that dead sleep, wherewith he had been seized ; but instantly, he is both alive, and fresh, and vigorous ; if they do but let him go, he walks so, as if he had ailed nothing, and receives and gives mutual gratulations ; I leave them entertaining each other with glad embraces, with discourses of reciprocal admiration, with praises and adorations of that God and Saviour that had fetched him into life.



### XXXIX. CHRIST'S *Procession to the Temple.*

St. MATT. xxi. 1.—16. Comp. MARK ix. 1.  
LUKE xix. 29.

**N**Ever did our Saviour take so much state upon him as now, that he was going towards his passion ; other journeys he measured on foot, without noise or train ; this with a princely equipage, and loud acclamation : wherein yet, O Saviour, whether shall I more wonder at thy majesty, or thine humility ; that divine majesty which lay hid under so humble appearance ; or that sincere humility, which veiled so great a glory ; thou, O Lord, whose chariots are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, wouldst make choice of the silliest of beasts, to carry thee in thy last, and royal progress. How well is thy birth suited with thy triumph ? Even that very

as whereon thou rodest, was prophesied of; neither couldst thou have made up those vatical<sup>a</sup> predictions, without this conveyance. O glorious, and yet homely pomp.

Thou wouldst not lose ought of thy right; thou that wast a king, wouldst be proclaimed so; but that it might appear thy kingdom was not of this world, thou that couldst have commanded all worldly magnificence, thoughtest fit to abandon it.

Instead of the kings of the earth, who reigning by thee, might have been employed in thine attendance, the people are thine heralds; their homely garments are thy foot-cloth, and carpets; their green boughs the strawings of thy way; Those palms which were wont to be borne in the hands of them that triumph, are strowed under the feet of thy beast. It was thy greatness and honour to contemn those glories, which worldly hearts were wont to admire.

Justly did thy followers hold the best ornaments of the earth worthy of no better than thy treading upon, neither could they ever account their garments so rich, as when they had been trampled upon by thy carriage; how happily did they think their backs disrobed for thy way? How gladly did they spend their breath in acclaiming thee, *Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is he, that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Where now are the great masters of the synagogue, that had enacted the ejection of whosoever should confess *Jesus* to be the Christ? Lo here bold and undaunted clients of the *Messiah*, that dare proclaim him in the public road, in the open streets. In vain shall the impotent enemies of Christ hope to suppress his glory; as soon shall they with their hand hide the face of the sun from shining to the world, as withhold the beams, of his divine truth from the eyes of men, by their envious opposition: In spite of all *Jewish* malignity, his kingdom is confessed, applauded, blessed. ○

• Of the Prophets.

O thou fairer than the children of men, in thy majesty ride on prosperously ; because of truth and meekness, and righteousness ; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

In this princely (and yet poor and despicable) pomp, doth our Saviour enter into the famous city of *Jerusalem* ; *Jerusalem* noted of old for the seat of kings, priests, prophets : Of kings, for there was the throne of *David* : of priests, for there was the temple : of prophets, for there they delivered their errands, and left their blood ; neither know I whether it were more wonder for a prophet to perish out of *Jerusalem*, or to be safe there ; thither would *Jesus* come as a king, as a priest, as a prophet : Acclaimed as a king ; teaching the people, and foretelling the woful vastation of it, as a prophet ; and as a priest taking possession of his temple, and vindicating it from the foul profanations of *Jewish* sacrilege. Oft before had he come to *Jerusalem* without any remarkable change, because without any semblance of state ; now that he gives some little glimpse of his royalty, *the whole city was moved*. When the sages of the east brought the first news of the king of the *Jews*, *Herod* was troubled and all *Jerusalem* with him ; and now that the king of the *Jews* comes himself (tho' in so mean a port) there is a new commotion ; the silence, and obscurity of Christ never troubles the world ; he may be an underling, without any stir ; but if he do but put forth himself never so little to bear the least sway amongst men, now their blood is up ; the whole city is moved ; neither is it otherwise in the private oeconomy of the soul ; O Saviour, whilst thou dost, as it were, hide thyself and lye still in the heart, and takest all terms contentedly from us, we entertain thee with no other than a friendly welcome : but when thou once beginnest to ruffle with our corruptions, and to exercise thy spiritual power, in the subjugation of  
our



our vile affections, now, all is in a secret uproar, all the angles of the heart are moved.

Altho', doubtless, this commotion was not so much of tumult, as of wonder. As when some uncouth sight presents itself, in a populous street, men run, and gaze, and throng, and enquire; the feet, the tongue, the eyes walk; one spectator draws on another; one asks, and presses another; the noise increases with the concourse, each helps to stir up others expectation; such was this of *Jerusalem*.

What means this strangeness? was not *Jerusalem* the spouse of Christ? Had he not chosen her out of all the earth? Had he not begotten many children of her, as the pledges of their love? How justly mayest thou now, O Saviour complain with that mirror of patience, My breath was grown strange to my own wife, though I intreated her for the childrens sake of mine own body; Even of thee is that fulfilled, which thy chosen vessel said of thy ministers; Thou art made a gazing stock to the world, to angels and to men.

As all the world was bound to thee for thine incarnation and residence upon the face of the earth, so especially *Judea*, to whose limits thou confinedst thyself; and therein, above all the rest, three cities, *Nazareth*, *Capernaum*, and *Jerusalem*; on whom thou bestowedst the most time, and cost of preaching, and miraculous works; yet, in all three thou receivedst not strange entertainment only, but hostile. In *Nazareth* they would have cast thee down headlong from the mount; in *Capernaum* they would have bound thee; in *Jerusalem* they crucified thee at last, and, now, are amazed at thy presence; those places, and persons that have the greatest helps, and privileges afforded to them, are not always the most answerable in the return of their thankfulness; Christ's being amongst us doth not make us happy, but his welcome; every day may we hear him in our streets,  
and

and yet, be as new to seek as these citizens of *Jerusalem*; *Who is this?*

Was it a question of applause, or of contempt, or of ignorance? Applause of his abettors, contempt of the Scribes and Pharisees, ignorance of the multitude? Surely, his abettors had not been moved at this sight; the Scribes and Pharisees had rather envied than contemned; the multitude doubtless inquired seriously, out of a desire of information; not that the citizens of *Jerusalem* knew not Christ, who was so ordinary a guest, so noted a Prophet amongst them; without doubt, this question was asked of that part of the train which went before this triumph, whilst our Saviour was not yet in sight, which, ere long, his presence had resolved; it had been their duty to have known, to have attended Christ, yea, to have publish'd him to others; since this is not done, it is well yet that they spend their breath in an inquiry; no doubt there were many that would not so much as leave their shop-board, and stop to their doors, or their windows, to say *Who is this?* as not thinking it could concern them, who passed by, whilst they might sit still; those *Greeks* were in some way to good, that could say to *Philip*, we would see *Jesus*; O Saviour, thou hast been so long amongst us, that it is our just shame if we know thee not; if we have been slack hitherto, let our zealous inquiry make amends for our neglect; let outward pomp and worldly glory draw the hearts and tongues of carnal men after them; oh let it be my care and happiness to ask after nothing but thee.

The attending disciples could not be to seek for an answer; which of the prophets have not put it into their mouths, *Who is this?* Ask *Moses* and he shall tell you; the seed of the woman that shall break the serpent's head; ask our father *Jacob*, and he shall tell you, *the Shiloh of the tribe of Judah*; ask *David*, and he shall tell you, *the King of glory*; ask *Isaiah*,  
he

he shall tell you, *Immanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace*; ask *Jeremiah*, and he shall tell you, *the righteous Branch*; ask *Daniel*, he shall tell you, *the Messiah*; ask *John the Baptist*, he shall tell you, *The Lamb of God*. If ye ask the God of the Prophets, he hath told you, *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*; yea, if all these be too good for you to consult with, the Devils themselves have been forced to say, *I know who thou art, even that holy One of God*. On no side hath Christ left himself without a testimony, and accordingly, the multitude here, have their answer ready, *This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth in Galilee*.

Ye under-value your master, O ye well-meaning followers of Christ: A Prophet? yea, more than a Prophet? *John Baptist* was so, yet was but the harbinger of this Messiah; this was that God, by whom the Prophets were both sent and inspired; Of *Nazareth*, say you? ye mistake him; *Bethlehem* was the place of this birth, the proof of his tribe, the evidence of his Messiahship; if *Nazareth* were honoured by his preaching, there was no reason he should be dishonoured by *Nazareth*: No doubt, he whom you confessed, pardoned the error of your confession; ye spake but according to the common style; the two disciples, in their walk to *Emmaus*, after the death and resurrection of Christ, give him no other title; this belief passed current with the people; and thus high even the vulgar thoughts could then rise; and, no doubt, even thus much was for that time very acceptable to the Father of mercies. If we make profession of the truth, according to our knowledge, tho' there be much imperfection in our apprehension and delivery, the mercy of our good God takes it well; not judging us for what we have not, but accepting us, in what we have. Shouldst thou, O God stand strictly upon the punctual degrees of knowledge, how wide would it go with millions of souls; for  
besides

besides much error in many, there is more ignorance ; but herein do we justly magnify and adore thy goodness, that where thou findest diligent endeavour of better information, matched with an honest simplicity of heart, thou passest by our unwilling defects, and crownest our well-meant confessions.

But, oh the wonderful hand of God in the carriage of this whole business : The people proclaimed Christ first a King, and now they proclaim him a Prophet : Why did not the *Roman* bands run into arms upon the one ? why did not the Scribes and Pharisees, and the envious priesthood, mutiny upon the other ? They had made decrees against him, they had laid wait for him, yet now he passes in state thro' their streets, acclaimed both a King and Prophet, without their reluctance : What can we impute this unto, but to the powerful, and over-ruling arm of his Godhead ? He that restrained the rage of *Herod*, and his courtiers, upon the first news of a king born, now restrains all the opposite powers of *Jerusalem*, from lifting up a finger against this last, and public avouchment of the regal and prophetic office of Christ. When flesh and blood have done their worst, they can be but such as he will make them ; if the legions of hell combine with the potentates of the earth, they cannot go beyond the reach of their tether : Whether they rise or sit still, they shall by an insensible ordination perform that will of the Almighty, which they least think of and most oppose.

With this humble pomp and just acclamation, O Saviour, dost thou pass thro' the streets of *Jerusalem* to the Temple ; thy first walk was not to *Herod's* palace, or to the market places, or burfes\* of that populous city, but to the temple ; whether it were out of duty or out of need : as a good son when he comes from far, his first alighting is at his father's house ;

• Exchanges or marts.

neither



neither would he think it other than preposterous to visit strangers before his friends, or friends before his father: Besides that the Temple had more use of thy presence; both there was the most disorder, and from thence as from a corrupt spring, it issued forth into all the channels of *Jerusalem*; a wise physician inquires first into the state of the head, heart, liver, stomach, the vital and chief parts, ere he ask after the petty symptoms of the meaner, and less-concerning members. Surely all good or evil begins at the Temple; if God have there his own, if men find there nothing but wholesome instruction, holy example, the common-wealth cannot want some happy tincture of piety, devotion, sanctimony, as that fragrant perfume from *Aaron's* head sweetens his utmost skirts.

Contrarily, the distempers of the Temple cannot but affect the secular state; as therefore the good husbandman, when he sees the leaves grow yellow, and the branches unthriving, looks presently to the root; so didst thou, O holy Saviour, upon sight of the disorders spread over *Jerusalem* and *Judea*, address thyself to the rectifying of the Temple.

No sooner is Christ alighted at the gate of the outer court of his Father's house, than he falls to work: Reformation was his errand; that he roundly attempts: That holy ground was profaned by sacrilegious barterings; within the third court of that sacred place was a public mart held; here was a throng of buyers and sellers; tho' not of all commodities; (the *Jews* were not so irreligious) only of those things, which were for the use of sacrifice; the *Israelites* came many of them from far; it was no less from *Dan* to *Beersheba* than the space of an hundred and threescore miles; neither could it be without much inconvenience for them to bring their bullocks, sheep, goats, lambs, meal, oil, and such other holy provision with them up to *Jerusalem*; order was taken by the priests that these might

might for money be had close by the altar; to the ease of the offerer, and the benefit of the seller, and, perhaps no disprofit to themselves; the pretence was fair, the practice unsufferable; the great owner of the Temple comes to vindicate the reputation, and rights of his own house, and in an indignation at that so foul abuse, lays fiercely about him, and with his three-stringed scourge whips out those sacrilegious chapmen, casts down their tables, throws away their baskets, scatters their heaps, and sends away their customers with smart and horror.

With what fear and astonishment did the repining offenders look upon so unexpected a Justicer? whilst their conscience lashed them more than those cords, and the terror of that meek chastiser more affrighted them, than his blows? Is this that mild and gentle Saviour that came to take upon him our stripes and to undergo the chastisements of our peace? Is this that quiet lamb, which before his shearers openeth not his mouth: See now how his eyes sparkle with holy anger, and dart forth beams of indignation in the faces of these guilty Money-changers; see how his hands deal strokes, and ruin? Yea, thus, thus it became thee, O thou gracious Redeemer of men, to let the world see, thou hast not lost thy justice in thy mercy; that there is not more lenity in thy forbearances than rigour in thy just severity; that thou canst thunder as well as shine.

This was not thy first act of this kind, at the entrance of thy public work, thou beganst so, as thou now shuttest up with purging thine house. Once before, had these offenders been whipt out of that holy place, which now they dare again defile. Shame, and smart is not enough to reclaim obdur'd offenders: Gainful sins are not easily checked, but less easily mastered; These bold flies, where they are beaten off, will alight again. He that is filthy will be filthy still.

Oft yet had our Saviour been (besides this) in the Temple, and often had seen the same disorder ; he doth not think fit to be always whipping ; it was enough, thus twice to admonish and chastise them before their ruin ; that God, who hates sin always, will not chide always, and strikes more seldom ; but he would have those few strokes perpetual monitors, and if those prevail not, he smites but once ; it is his uniform course, first the whip, and if that speed not then the sword.

There is a reverence due to God's house for the owner's sake, for the services sake, secular and profane actions are not for that sacred roof, much less uncivil and beastly ; what but holiness can become that place which is the beauty of holiness.

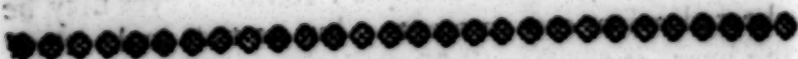
The fairest pretences cannot bear out a sin with God ; never could there be more plausible colours cast upon any act ; the convenience, the necessity of provisions for the sacrifice ; yet thro' all these do the fiery eyes of our Saviour see the foul covetousness of the priests, the fraud of the money-changers, the intolerable abuse of the Temple : common eyes may be cheated with easy pretexts ; but he that looks thro' the heart at the face, justly answers our apologies with scourges.

None but the hand of public authority must reform the abuses of the Temple ; if all be out of course there, no man is barred from sorrow ; the grief may reach to all, the power of reformation, only to those whom it concerneth ; it was but a just question, tho' ill propounded to *Moses*, who made thee a judge, or a ruler ? We must all imitate the zeal of our Saviour, we may not imitate his correction ; if we strike uncalled, we are justly stricken for our arrogation, for our presumption : a tumultuary remedy may prove a medicine worse than the disease.

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But what shall I say of so sharp and imperious an act, from so meek an agent? why did not the Priests and Levites (whose this gain partly was) abet these money-changers, and make head against Christ? why did not those multitudes of men stand upon their defence, and wrest that whip out of the hand of a seemingly weak, and unarmed prophet? but instead hereof run away, like sheep from before him; not daring to abide his presence, tho' his hand had been still: surely, had these men been so many armies, yea, so many legions of devils, when God will astonish and chase them, they cannot have the power to stand and resist; how easy is it for him that made the heart, to put either terror or courage into it at pleasure? O Saviour, it was none of thy least miracles, that thou didst thus drive out a world of able offenders, in spite of their gain, and stomachful resolutions; their very profit had no power to stay them against thy frowns. Who hath resisted thy will? mens hearts are not their own: they are, they must be such as their maker will have them.



### XL. *The Fig-tree cursed.*

St. MATT. xxi. 17—20. com. MAR Kxi. 12—14.

**W**HEN in this state, our Saviour had rid thro' the streets of *Jerusalem*, that evening he lodged not there; whether he would not, (that after so public an acclamation of the people he might avoid all suspicion of plots, or popularity; even unjust jealousies must be shunned, neither is there less wisdom in the prevention, than in the remedy of evils) or, whether he could not, for want of an invitation! *Hosanna* was more cheap, than an entertainment; and perhaps, the envy of so stomached a reformation, discouraged



couraged his hosts : however, he goes that evening, supperless, out of Jerusalem ; O unthankful citizens ; do ye thus part with your no less meek than glorious King ? His title was not more proclaimed in your streets, than your own ingratitude ; if he have purged the temple, yet your hearts are foul ; there is no wonder in mens unworthiness, there is more than wonder in thy mercy, O thou Saviour of men, that wouldst yet return thither, where thou givest them their breakfast ; if thou mayst not spend the night with them, thou wilt with them spend the day ; O love of unthankful souls ! not discourageable by the most hateful indignities ; by the basest repulses ! what burden canst thou shrink under, who canst bear the weight of ingratitude ?

Thou that givest food to all things living, art thyself hungry ; *Martha, Mary, and Lazarus* kept not so poor an house, but that thou mightest have eaten something at *Bethany* ; whether thine haste out-ran thine appetite ; or whether, on purpose thou forbarest repast to give opportunity to thine ensuing miracle, I neither act, nor resolve ; this was not the first time that thou wast hungry ; as thou wouldst be a man, so thou wouldst suffer those infirmities that belong to humanity ; thou camest to be our high-priest ; it was thy act and intention, not only to interceed for thy people, but to transfer unto thyself, as their sins, so their weaknesses and complaints ; thou knowest to pity what thou hast felt : are we pinched with want, we endure but what thou didst, we have reason to be patient ; thou enduredst what we do, we have reason to be thankful.

But what shall we say to this thine early hunger ? the morning, as it is privileged from excess, so from need ; the stomach is not wont to rise with the body : surely, as thine occasions were, no season was exempted from thy want ; thou hadst spent the day before in the holy labour of thy reformation ; after a supperless departure thou spentest the night in prayer ;

no meal refreshed thy toil ; what do we think much to forbear a morsel, or to break a sleep for thee, who didst thus neglect thyself for us ?

As if meat were no part of thy care, as if any thing would serve to stop the mouth of hunger ; thy breakfast is expected from the next tree. A fig-tree grew by the way side, full grown, well spread, thick leaved, and such as might promise enough to a remote eye ; thither thou cam'st to seek that, which thou foundest not ; and not finding what thou soughtest, as displeased with thy disappointment, cursedest that plant which deluded thy hopes ; thy breath instantly blasted that deceitful tree ; it did (no otherwise than the whole world must needs do) wither, and die with thy curse.

O Saviour, I had rather wonder at thine actions, than discuss them. If I should say that, as man, thou either knewest not, or consideredst not of this fruitfulness, it could no way prejudice thy divine omniscience ; this infirmity were no worse than thy weariness or hunger ; it was no more disarrangement to thee, to grow in knowledge, than in stature ; neither was it any more disgrace to thy perfect humanity, that thou (as man) knewest not all things at once, than that thou wert not in thy childhood at thy full growth. But herein I doubt not to say, it is more likely thou camest purposely to this tree ; knowing the barrenness of it answerable to the season ; and fore-resolving the event ; that thou mightest hence ground the occasion of so instructive a miracle ; like as thou knewest *Lazarus* was dying, was dead, yet wouldst not seem to take notice of his dissolution, that thou mightest the more glorify thy power in his resuscitation : it was thy willing and determined disappointment for a greater purpose.

But why didst thou curse a poor tree for the want of that fruit, which the season yielded not ? If it pleased thee to call for that, which it could not give, the  
plant

plant was innocent ; and if innocent, why cursed ?  
O Saviour, it is fitter for us to adore than to examine ;  
we may be faucy in inquiring after thee, and fond in  
answering for thee.

If that season were not for a ripe fruit, yet for some  
fruit it was ; who knows not the nature of the fig-  
tree to be always bearing ? that plant (if not alto-  
gether barren) yeilds a continual succession of increase ;  
whilst one fig is ripe, another is green ; the same  
bough can content both our taste, and our hope ;  
this tree was defective in both ; yeilding nothing but  
an empty shade to the mishoping traveller.

Besides that, I have learnt that thou, O Saviour,  
wert wont not to speak only, but to work parables ;  
and what was this other than a real parable of thine ?  
All this while thou hadst been in the world, thou  
hadst given many proofs of thy mercy (the earth was  
full of thy goodness) none of thy judgments ; now,  
immediately, before thy passion, thou thoughtest fit  
to give this double demonstration of thy just austerity ;  
how else should the world have seen thou canst be se-  
vere, as well as meek, and merciful ; and why  
mightest not thou, who madest all things, take liberty  
to destroy a plant for thine own glory ? Wherefore  
serve thy best creatures but for the praise of thy mer-  
cy and justice ? What great matter was it, if thou  
who once said'st, *Let the earth bring forth the herb  
yeilding seed, and the tree yeilding the fruit of its own  
kind ; shalt now say, Let this fruitless tree wither ?*  
All this yet was done in figure ; in this act of thine,  
I see both an emblem, and a prophecy. How didst  
thou herein mean to teach thy disciples, how much  
thou hatest an unfruitful profession ; and what judg-  
ments thou meantest to bring upon that barren gene-  
ration ? Once before hadst thou compared the *Jewish*  
nation to a fig-tree in the midst of thy vineyard ;  
which after three years expectation and culture, yeild-  
ing no fruit, was by thee, the owner, doomed to a

speedy excision; now thou acatest, what thou then saidst; no tree abounds more with leaf and shade; no nation abounded more with ceremonial observations and semblances of piety; outward profession, where there is want of inward truth and real practice, doth but help to draw on and aggravate judgment: had this fig-tree been utterly bare and leaf-less, it had perhaps escaped the curse. Hear this ye vain hypocrites, that care only to shew well, never caring for the sincere truth of a conscionable obedience; your fair out-side shall be sure to help you to a curse.

That which was the fault of this tree, is the punishment of it, *fruitlessness*: *Let no fruit grow on thee hence forward for ever*; had the boughs been appointed to be torn down, and the body split in pieces, the doom had been more easy; that juicy plant might yet have recovered, and have lived to recompence this deficiency; now it shall be what it was, *fruitless*: wo be to that church, or soul, that is punished with her own sin: outward plagues are but favour in comparison of spiritual judgments.

That curse might well have stood with a long continuance; the tree might have lived long, though *fruitless*; but no sooner is the word passed, than the leaves flag, and turn yellow, the branches wrinkle and shrink, the bark discolours, the root dries, the plant withers.

O God, what creature is able to abide the blasting of the breath of thy displeasure? Even the most great and glorious angels of Heaven, could not stand one moment before thine anger, but perished under thy wrath everlastingly. How irresistible is thy power, how dreadful are thy judgments? Lord, chastise my fruitlessness, but punish it not; at least punish it, but curse it not, least I wither and be consumed.

CHRIST



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XLI. CHRIST *betrayed.*

St. MATT. xxvi. 14-25. and JOHN xiii 21-30.

SUCH an eye-fore was Christ, that raised *Lazarus*, and *Lazarus* whom Christ raised, to the envious priests, scribes, elders of the *Jews*, that they consult to murder both; whilst either of them lives, neither can the glory of that miracle die, nor the shame of the oppugners.

Those malicious heads are laid together in the parlour of *Caiaphas*; happy had it been for them, if they had spent but half those thoughts upon their own salvation, which they mis-employed upon the destruction of the innocent. At last, this results, that force is not their way; subtilty, and treachery must do that, which would be vainly attempted by power.

Who is so fit to work this feat against Christ, as one of his own? There can be no reason, where is not some trust. Who so fit among the domesticks, as he that bare the bag, and over-lov'd that which he bare? That heart which hath once enslaved itself to red and white earth, may be made any thing; who can trust to the power of good means, when *Judas*, who heard Christ daily, whom others heard to preach Christ daily, who daily saw Christ's miracles, and daily wrought miracles in Christ's name, is (at his best) a thief, and ere long a traitor: that crafty and malignant spirit which presided in that bloody council, hath easily found out a fit instrument for this hellish plot. As God knows, so Satan guesses, who are his; and will be sure to make use of his own. If *Judas* were Christ's domestick, yet he was *Mammon's* servant; he could not but hate that mas-

ter whom he formally professed to serve, whilst he really served that master, which Christ professed to hate; he is but in his trade, whilst he is bartering even for his master, *What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?* Saidst thou not well, O Saviour, I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a Devil; thou that knewest to distinguish betwixt men and spirits, callest Judas by his right name; lo, he is become a tempter to the worst of evils.

Wretched Judas, whether shall I more abhor thy treachery or wonder at thy folly? What will they, what can they give thee valuable to that head, which thou profferest to sale? were they able to pay, or thou capable to receive all those precious metals that are laid up in the secret cabins of the whole earth, how were this price equivalent to the worth of him that made them? Had they been able to fetch down those rich and glittering spangles of heaven, and to have put them into thy fist, what had this been to weigh with a God? How basely therefore dost thou speak of chaffering for him, whose the world was? *What will ye give me?* Alas, what were they, what had they, miserable men, to pay for such a purchase? The time was, when he that set thee on work could say, *all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them are mine; and I give them to whom I please, all these will I give thee:* had he now made that offer to thee, in this woful bargain, it might have carried some colour of a temptation; and even thus it had been a match ill made; but for thee to tender a trade of so invaluable a commodity, to these pelting petty chapmen, for thirty poor silverlings, it was no less base than wicked.

How unequal is this rate? thou that valuedst Mary's ointment, which she bestowed upon the feet of Christ, at three hundred pieces of silver, sellest thy master, on whom that precious odour was spent at thirty: worldly hearts are penny-wise, and pound-foolish; they  
know

know how to set high prices upon the worthless trash of this world ; but for heavenly things, or the God that owns them, these they shamefully undervalue.

*And I will deliver him unto you ;* false and presumptuous *Judas* ; it was more than thou couldst do ; thy price was not more too low, than thy undertaking was too high ; had all the powers of hell combined with thee, they could not have delivered their master into [the hands of men ; the act was none but his own ; all that he did, all that he suffered was perfectly voluntary ; had he pleased to resist, how easily had he with one breath blown thee and thy accomplices down into their hell : it is no thank to thee, that he would be delivered. O Saviour, all our safety, all our comfort depends not so much upon thine act, as upon thy will, in vain should we have hoped for the benefit of a forced redemption.

The bargain is driven, the price paid ; *Judas* returns and looks no less smoothly upon his master, and his fellows, than as if he had done no dis-service ; what cares he ? his heart tells him he is rich ; though it tell him he is false : he was not now first an hypocrite : the passover is at hand, no man is so busy to prepare for it, or more devoutly forward to receive it, than *Judas*.

O the sottishness and obdureness of this son of perdition ! How many proofs had he formerly of his master's omniscience ? There was no day wherein he saw not that thoughts, and things absent came familiar under his cognisance ; yet this miscreant dares plot a secret villainy against his person, and face it : if he cannot be honest, yet he will be close. That he may be notoriously impudent, he shall know he is descryed ; whilst he thinks fit to conceal his treachery, our Saviour thinks not fit to conceal the knowledge of that treacherous conspiracy. *Verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me : who would not think*

but that discovered wickedness should be ashamed of itself ? Did not *Judas* (think we) blush, and grow pale again ; and cast down his guilty eyes, and turn away his troubled countenance at so galling an intimation ? Custom of sin steels the brow, and makes it incapable of any relenting impressions ; could the other disciples have discerned any change, in any one of their faces, they had not been so sorrowfully affected with the charge : Methinks I see, how intently they bent their eyes upon each others, as if they would have looked thro' those windows down into the bosom ; with what self-confidence, with what mutual jealousy, they perused each others foreheads ; and now, as rather thinking fit to distrust their own innocence, than their Master's assertion, each trembles to say, *Lord is it I ?* It is possible there may lurk secret wickedness in some blind corner of the heart, which we know not of ; it is possible that time and temptation, working upon our corruption, may at last draw us into some such sin, as we could not fore-believe ; whither may we not fall, if we be left to our own strength ? It is both wise and holy to misdoubt the worst ; *Lord is it I ?*

In the mean time, how fair hath *Judas* (all this while) carried with his fellows ? Had his former life bewrayed any falshood or misdemeanor, they had soon found where to pitch their just suspicion, now *Judas* goes for so honest a man, that every disciple is rather ready to suspect himself than him ; it is true he was a thief, but who knows that besides his Maker ? The outsides of men are no less deceitful than their hearts ; it is not more unsafe to judge by outward appearances than it is uncharitable not to judge so.

Oh the head-strong resolutions of wickedness, not to be checked by any opposition ; who would not but have thought if the notice of an intended evil could not have prevented it, yet that the threats of judgment should have affrighted the boldest offender.

*Judas*



*Judas* can sit by, and hear his Master say, *Wo be to the man by whom the Son of man is betrayed, it had been better for that man never to have been born; and is no more blanked than very innocence: but thinks, What care I? I have the money; I shall escape the shame; the fact shall be close, the match gainful: it will be long ere I get so much by my service; if I fare well for the present, I shall shift well enough for the future: thus secretly, he claps up another bargain; he makes a covenant with death, and with hell an agreement: O *Judas*, didst thou ever hear ought but truth fall from the mouth of that thy Divine Master? Canst thou distrust the certainty of that dreadful menace of vengeance? how then durst thou persist in the purpose of so flagitious and damnable a villany? Resolved sinners run on desperately in their wicked courses; and have so bent their eyes upon the profit, or pleasure of their mischievous projects, that they will not see hell lye open before them in the way.*

As if that shameless man meant to out-brave all accusations and to outface his own heart, he dares ask too; *Master, is it I?* No disciple shall more zealously abominate that crime than he that fosters it in his bosom; whatever the searcher of hearts knows by him, is locked up in his own breast; to be perfidious is nothing, so he may be secret: his Master knows him for a traitor, it is not long that he shall live to complain; his fellows think him honest; all is well, whilst he is well esteemed. Reputation is the only care of false hearts, not truth of being, not conscience of merit; so they may seem fair to men, they care not how foul they are to God.

Had our Saviour only had this knowledge at the second hand, this boldness had been enough to make him suspect the credit of the best intelligence; who could imagine that a guilty man dares thus brow-beat a just accusation? Now, he, whose piercing and un-failing eye sees things as they are, not as they seem,  
can

can peremptorily convince the impudence of this hollow questionist, with a direct affirmation, *Thou hast said*; Foolish traitor, couldst thou think that those weak eyes of thine would indure the beams of the sun, or that counterfeit slip the fire? Was it not sufficient for thee to be secretly vicious; but thou must presume to contest with an omniscient accuser? Hast thou yet enough? thou supposest thy crime unknown; to men it was so; had thy master been no more, it had been so to him; now his knowledge argues him divine; how durst thou yet resolve to lift up thy hand against him, who knows thine offence, and can either prevent, or revenge it? As yet the charge was private, either not heard, or not observed by thy fellows; it shall be at first whispered to one, and at last known to all: Bashful and penitent sinners are fit to be concealed; shame is meet for those that have none.

Curiosity of knowledge is an old disease of human nature; besides, *Peter's* zeal would not let him dwell under the danger of so doubtful a crimination; he cannot but sit on thorns, till he know the man; his signs ask, what his voice dare not; what law requires all followers to be equally beloved? Why may not our favours be freely dispensed where we like best; without envy, without prejudice? None of Christ's train could complain of neglect; *John* is highest in grace. Blood, affection, zeal, diligence have indured him above his fellows; he that is dearest in respect, is next in place; in that form of side\*-fitting at the table he leaned on the bosom of *Jesus*; where is more love, there may be more boldness; this secrecy, and intireness privileges *John* to ask that safely, which *Peter* might not without much inconvenience, and peril of a check. The beloved disciple well understands this silent language, and dares put *Peter's* thought into words: Love shutteth out fear; O Saviour, the confidence of thy goodness emboldens us, not to shrink at any suit; thy love shed abroad in our hearts bids us ask  
that

\* The Jews used to lye sideways on a kind of Beds at their Meals.

that, which, in a stranger, were no better than presumption. Once, when *Peter* ask'd thee a question concerning *John*; *What shall this man do?* he received a short answer; *What is that to thee?* Now, when *John* asks thee a question (no less seemingly curious) at *Peter's* instance, *Who is it that betrays thee?* however, thou mightst have returned him the same answer (since neither of their persons was any more concerned) yet thou condescendest to a mild and full (tho' secret) satisfaction; there was not so much difference in the men, as in the matter of the demand; no occasion was given to *Peter* of moving that question concerning *John*; the indefinite assertion of treason amongst the disciples was a most just occasion of moving *John's* question for *Peter*, and himself. That which therefore was timorously demanded, is answered graciously; *He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it; And he gave the sop to Judas*: How loath was our Saviour to name him, whom he was not unwilling to design? All is here expressed by dumb signs; the hand speaks what the tongue would not; in the same language, wherein *Peter* asked the question of *John*, doth our Saviour shape an answer to *John*; what a beck demanded, is answered by a sop.

O Saviour, I do not hear thee say; Look on whomsoever I frown, or to whomsoever I do a public affront, that is the man; but, *To whomsoever I shall give a sop*; Surely a by-stander would have thought this man deep in thy books, and would have construed this act, as they did thy tears for *Lazarus*; *See how he loves him*: To carve a man out of thine own dish, what could it seem to argue but a singularity of respect? Yet, lo, there is but one whom thou hatest, one only traitor at thy board, and thou givest him a sop: The outward gifts of God are not always the proofs of this love: yea, sometimes are bestowed in displeasure; had not he been a wise disciple that should have envied the great favour done to *Judas*, and have stomached his

own preterition\*? so foolish are they, who measuring God's affection by temporal benefits, are ready to applaud prospering wickedness, and to grudge outward blessings to them which are incapable of any better.

After the sop, Satan entred into *Judas*: Better had it been for that treacherous disciple to have wanted that morsel; not that there was any malignity in the bread; or that the sop had any power to convey Satan into the receiver; or that by a necessary concomitance that evil spirit was in or with it. Favours ill used make the heart more capable of further evil; that wicked spirit commonly takes occasion by any of God's gifts, to assault us the more eagerly; after our sacramental morsel, if we be not the better, we are sure the worse: I dare not say, yet I dare think that *Judas*, comparing his Master's words, and *Job's* whisperings with the tender of this sop, and finding himself thus denoted, was now so much the more irritated to perform what he had wickedly purposed: Thus Satan took advantage by the sop of a further possession: twice before had that evil spirit made a palpable entry into that leud heart; first, in his covetousness and theft; those sinful habits could not be without that author of ill; then in his damnable resolution and plot of so hainous a conspiracy against Christ; yet now (as if it were new to begin) *After the sop Satan entered*; as in every gross sin which we entertain, we give harbour to that evil spirit, so in every degree of growth in wickedness, new hold is taken by him of the heart: No sooner is the foot over the threshold, than we enter into the house, when we pass thence into the inner rooms, we make still but a perfect entrance. At first, Satan entred to make the house of *Judas's* heart his own; now he enters into it as his own; the first purpose of sin opens the gates to Satan; consent admits him into the entry; full resolution of sin gives up the keys to his hands, and puts him into absolute possession. What a plain difference



there is betwixt the regenerate and evil heart? Satan lays siege to the best by his temptations: and sometimes, upon battery, and breach made, enters; the other admits him by willing composition; when he is entered upon the regenerate, he is entertained with perpetual skirmishes and by an holy violence at last repulsed; in the other he is plausibly received, and freely commandeth. O the admirable meekness of this Lamb of God; I see not a frown, I hear not a check; but *What thou dost, do quickly*: why do we startle at our petty wrongs, and swell with anger, and break into furious revenges upon every occasion, when the pattern of our patience lets not fall one harsh word upon so foul and bloody a traitor? Yea, so fairly is this carried, that the disciples as yet can apprehend no change; they innocently think of commodities to be bought; when Christ speaks of their master sold; and, as one that longs to be out of pain, hastens the pace of his irreclaimable conspirator; *Thou dost, do quickly*; it is one thing to say, do what thou intendest; and another to say, do quickly what thou dost: there was villany in the deed; the speed had no sin; the time was harmless; whilst the man, and the act was wicked: O *Judas*, how happy had it been for thee, if thou hadst never done what thou perfidiously intendest; but since thou wilt needs do it, delay is but a torment.

That steady heart yet relents not; the confirmed traitor knows his way, to the high priest's hall, and to the garden; the watch word is already given; *Hail master, and a kiss*; yet more hypocrisy! yet more presumption upon so over-strained a lenity? How knewest thou, O thou false traitor, whether that sacred cheek would suffer itself to be defiled with thine impure touch? Thou well foundest thy treachery was unmasked; thine heart could not be so false to thee, as not to tell thee how hateful thou wert; go, kiss, and adore those silverlings, which thou art too sure of;



*Judas and his train, whom they then saw attended with Moses and Elias? How could they be discouraged to hear the reproaches of base men, when they had heard the voice of God to him from that excellent glory, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.*

Now, before these eyes, this Sun begins to be over-cast with clouds; *He began to be sorrowful and very heavy*: many sad thoughts for mankind, had he secretly hatched, and yet smothered in his own breast, now, his grief is too great to keep in; *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*; O Saviour, what must thou needs feel, when thou saidst so? Feeble minds are apt to bemoan themselves upon light occasions; the grief must needs be violent that causeth a strong heart to break forth into a passionate complaint; wo is me, what a word is this for the son of God? Where is that comforter, which thou promisedst to send to others? Where is that thy father of all mercies and God of all comfort in whose presence is the fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore? Where are those constant, and chearful resolutions of a fearless walking thro' the valley of the shadow of death? Alas, if that face were not hid from thee, whose essence could not be dis-united, these pangs could not have been; the Sun was withdrawn a while, that there might be a cool, though not a dark night, as in the world, so in thy breast; withdrawn, in respect of sight, not of being; it was the hardest piece of thy sufferings that thou must be disconsolate.

But to whom dost thou make this moan, O thou Saviour of men? Hard is that man driven that is fain to complain to his inferiours: had *Peter*, or *James*, or *John* thus bewailed himself to thee, there had been ease to their soul in venting itself; thou hadst been both apt to pity them, and able to relieve them; but now in that thou lamentest thy case to them, alas  
what

what issue couldst thou expect? They might be astonish'd with thy grief, but there is neither power in their hands to free thee from those sorrows, nor power in their compassion to mitigate them: nay, in this condition, what could all the Angels of Heaven (as of themselves) do to succour thee? What strength could they have but from thee? What creature can help, when thou complainest? It must be only the stronger, that can aid the weak.

Old and holy *Simeon* could fore-say to thy blessed mother, that *a sword should pierce through her soul*; but, alas, how many swords at once pierce thine? Every one of these words is both sharp and edged; *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*; what human soul is capable of the conceit of the least of those sorrows that oppress'd thine? It was not thy body that suffered now; the pain of body is but as the body of pain; the anguish of the soul is as the soul of anguish; that, and in that thou suffer'dst; where are they that dare so far disparage thy sorrow, as to say thy soul suffered only in sympathy with thy body; not immediately, but by participation; not in itself, but in its partner? Thou best knewest what thou didst feel, and thou that didst feel thine own pain, canst cry out of thy soul. Neither didst thou say, my soul is troubled; so it often was, even to tears; but *My soul is sorrowful*: as if it had been before assaulted; now possessed with grief: nor yet this in any tolerable moderation; changes of passion are incident to every human soul, but *exceeding sorrowful*; yet, there are degrees in the very extremities of evils; those that are most vehement, may yet be capable of a remedy, at least, a relaxation; thine was past these hopes; *exceeding sorrowful unto death*.

What was it, what could it be, O Saviour, that lay thus heavy upon thy divine soul? Was it the fear of death? Was it the fore-felt pain, shame, torment of thine ensuing crucifixion? O poor and base thoughts  
of





of the narrow hearts of cowardly and impotent mortality ! How many thousands of thy blessed martyrs have welcomed no less tortures, with smiles, and gratulations ? and have made a sport of those exquisite cruelties, which their very tyrants thought unsufferable ? Whence had they this strength but from thee ? If their weakness were thus undaunted, and prevalent, what was thy power ? No, no ; it was the sad weight of the sin of mankind ; it was the heavy burden of thy father's wrath for our sin, that thus pressed thy soul ; and wrung from thee these bitter expressions.

What can it avail thee, O Saviour, to tell thy grief to men ? Who can ease thee, but he of whom thou saidst, *My Father is greater than I* : lo, to him thou turnest ; *O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*

Was not this that prayer (O dear Christ) which in the days of thy flesh thou offeredst up with strong crying, and tears, to him that was able to save thee from death ? Surely, this was it ; never was cry so strong ; never was God thus solicited. How could Heaven chose but shake at such a prayer from the power that made it ? How can my heart but tremble to hear this suit from the captain of our salvation ; O thou that saidst, *I and my father are one*, dost thou suffer ought from thy father, but what thou wouldst, what thou determinedst ? Was this cup of thine either casual, or forced ? Wouldst thou wish for what thou knewest thou wouldst not have possible ? Far, far be these misraised thoughts of our ignorance, and frailty ; thou camest to suffer, and thou wouldst do what thou camest for ; yet since thou wouldst be a man, thou wouldst take all of man, save sin ; it is but human (and not sinful) to be loath to suffer what we may avoid ; in this velleity of thine thou wouldst shew what that nature of ours, which thou hadst assumed, could incline to wish ; but in thy resolution, thou wouldst

wouldst show us what thy victorious thoughts raised, and assisted by thy divine power, had determinately pitched upon; *nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*: as man thou hadst a will of thine own; no human soul can be perfect without that main faculty; that will, which naturally could be content to incline towards an exemption from miseries; gladly vails to that divine will, whereby thou art designed to the chastisements of our peace: those pains, which in themselves were grievous, thou embracest as decreed; so as thy fear hath given place to thy love and obedience. How should we have known these evils so formidable, if thou hadst not, in half a thought, inclined to deprecate them? How could we have avoided so formidable and deadly evils, if thou hadst not willingly undergone them? We acknowledge thine holy fear, we adore thy divine fortitude.

Whilst the mind was in this fearful agitation, it is no marvel if thy feet were not fixed; thy place is more changed than thy thoughts, one while thou walkest to thy drouzy attendants, and stirrest up their needful vigilancy, then thou returnest to thy passionate devotions; thou fallest again upon thy face; if thy body be humbled down to the earth, thy soul is yet lower; thy prayers are so much more vehement as thy pangs are; *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* O my Saviour, what an agony am I in, whilst I think of thine? What pain, what fear, what strife, what horror was in thy sacred breast? How didst thou struggle under the weight of our sins, that thou thus sweatest, that thou thus bledest; all was peace with thee; thou wert one with thy coeternal and coessential father; all the Ange's worshipped thee; all the powers of Heaven and Earth awfully acknowledged thine infiniteness. It was our person that scoffed thee in this misery and torment; in that, thou sustainedst thy

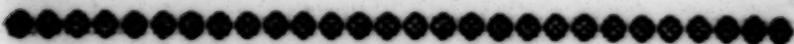
thy father's wrath and our curse; if eternal death be unsufferable, if every sin deserve eternal death; what, O what was it for thy soul in this short time of thy bitter passion, to answer those millions of eternal deaths, which all the sins of all mankind had deserved from the just hand of thy godhead? I marvel not if thou bleedest a sweat, if thou sweatest blood: If the moisture of that sweat be from the body, the tincture of it is from the soul; as there never was such another sweat, so neither can there be ever such a suffering; it is no wonder if the sweat were more than natural, when the suffering was more than human.

O Saviour, so willing was that precious blood of thine to be let forth for us, that it was ready to prevent thy prosecutors; and issued forth in those pores, before thy wounds were opened by thy tormentors: O that my heart could bleed unto thee with true inward compunction for those sins of mine, which are guilty of this thine agony; and have drawn blood of thee both in the garden and on the cross; wo is me, I had been in hell, if thou hadst not been in thine agony; I had scorched, if thou hadst not sweat; O let me abhor my own wickedness, and admire and bless thy mercy.

But, O ye blessed spirits, which came to comfort my afflicted Saviour; how did ye look upon this Son of God, when ye saw him labouring for life under these violent temptations? with what astonishment did ye behold him bleeding whom ye adored? In the wilderness, after his duel with Satan, ye came and ministered unto him; and now, in the garden, whilst he is in an harder combat, ye appear to strengthen him: Oh the wise and marvellous dispensation of the Almighty! whom God will afflict, an angel shall relieve; the Son shall suffer, the servant shall comfort him; the God of angels droopeth, the angel of God strengthens him.

Blessed *Jesu*, if as man thou wouldst be made a little lower

lower than the angels ; how can it disparage thee to be attended, and cheered up by an angel ? Thine humiliation would not disdain comfort from meaner hands ; how free was it for thy Father, to convey seasonable consolations to thine humbled soul, by whatsoever means ? Behold, though thy cup shall not pass ; yet it shall be sweetened ; what if thou see not (for the time) thy Father's face, yet thou shalt feel his hand ? what could that spirit have done without the God of spirits ; O Father of mercies, thou mayest bring thine into agonies, but thou wilt never leave them there ; in the midst of the sorrows of my heart, thy comforts shall refresh my soul ; whatsoever be the means of my support, I know and adore the author.



**XLIII. PETER and MALCHUS : or CHRIST  
Apprehended.**

**St. MATT. xxvi. 47—56.**

**W** Herefore, O Saviour, didst thou take those three choice disciples with thee from their fellows, but that thou expectedst some comfort from their presence? A seasonable word may sometimes fall from the meanest attendant; and the very society of those we trust, carries in it some kind of contentment; Alas, what broken reeds are men? Whilst thou art sweating in thine agony, they are snoring securely; Admonitions, threats, intreaties cannot keep their eyes open; thou tellest them of danger, they will needs dream of ease; and, though twice roused (as if they had purposed this neglect) they carelessly sleep out thy sorrow, and their own peril; what help hast thou of such followers? In the mount of thy transfiguration they slept, and besides fell



fell on their faces, when they should behold thy glory, and were not themselves for fear; in the garden of thine agony they fell upon the ground for drowsiness; when they should compassionate thy sorrow, and lost themselves in a stupid sleepiness. Doubtless even this disregard made thy prayers so much more fervent; the less comfort we find on earth, the more we seek above, neither soughtest thou more than thou foundest; lo, thou wert heard in that which thou fearedst; an angel supplies the place of men, that spirit was vigilant, whilst thy disciples were heavy; the exchange was happy.

No sooner is this good angel vanished than that domestic devil appears. *Judas* comes up, and shows himself in the head of those miscreant troops: he, whose too much honour it had been to be a follower of so blessed a master, affects now to be the leader of this wicked rabble; the sheep's fleece is now cast off; the wolf appears in his own likeness; he that would be false to his Master, would be true to his chapmen: even evil spirits keep touch with themselves. The bold traitor dare yet still mix hypocrisy with villany; his very salutations and kisses murder; O Saviour, this is no news to thee; all those who under a show of godliness practise impiety, do still betray thee thus. Thou, who hadst said, one of you is a devil, didst not now say, Avoid Satan; but *Friend, wherefore art thou come?* As yet, *Judas*, it was not too late: had there been any the least spark of grace yet remaining in that perfidious bosom, this word had fetcht thee upon thy knees: All this sunshine cannot thaw an obdurate heart. The sign is given; *Jesus* is taken. Wretched traitor, why wouldst thou, for this purpose, be thus attended? and ye foolish priests and elders, why sent you such a band, and so armed, for this apprehension? One messenger had been enough for a voluntary prisoner; had my Saviour been unwilling to be taken, all your forces (with all the legions of hell to help them) had been too little; since he was willing to be

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attacked, two were too many; when he did but say, *I am he*, that easy breath alone, routed all your troops and cast them to the earth, whom it might as easily have cast down into hell; what if he had said, I will not be taken; where had ye been? or what could your swords and staves have done against omnipotence.

Those disciples that failed of their vigilance failed not of their courage; they had heard their Master speak of providing swords, and now they thought it was time to use them: *Shall we smite?* They were willing to fight for him, with whom they were not careful to watch: but, of all other, *Peter* was most forward; instead of opening his lips, he unsheathed his sword; and instead of *shall I?* smites. He had noted *Malchus*, a busy servant of the high-priest, too ready to second *Judas*, and to lay his rude hands upon the Lord of life; against this man, his heart rises, and his hand is lift up: that ear which had too officiously listened to the unjust, and cruel charge of his wicked master, is now severed from that worse head which it had mis-served.

I love, and honour thy zeal, oh blessed disciple; thou couldst not brook wrong done to thy divine Master: had thy life been dearer to thee than his safety, thou hadst not drawn thy sword upon a whole troop: It was in earnest that thou saidst, *Though all men, yet not I*; and *Though I should die with thee, yet I will not deny thee*; lo, thou art ready to die upon him that should touch that sacred person; what would thy life now have been, in comparison of renouncing him? Since thou wert so fervent, why didst thou not rather fall upon that treachor that betrayed him, than that serjeant that arrested him? Surely, the sin was so much greater, as the plot of mischief is more than the execution: as a domestic is nearer than a stranger, as the treason of a friend is worse than the forced enmity of an hireling. Was it, that the guilty wretch, upon the fact done, subdued himself and shrouded his

his false head under the wings of darkness? was it that thou couldst not so suddenly apprehend the odious depth of that villany, and instantly hate him that had been thy old companion? was it that thy amazedness as yet conceived not the purposed issue of this seizure, and astonishedly waited for the success? was it, that though *Judas* were more faulty, yet *Malchus* was more imperiously cruel? However, thy courage was awaked with thyself; and thy heart was no less sincere, than thine hand was rash: *Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.* Good intentions are no warrant for our actions; O Saviour thou canst at once accept of our meanings, and censure our deeds; could there be an affection more worth encouragement than the love to such a master? could there be a more just cause wherein to draw his sword, than in thy quarrel? Yet this love, this quarrel cannot shield *Peter* from thy check; thy meek tongue smites him gently, who had furiously smote thine enemy; *Put up thy sword.*

It was *Peter's* sword; but to put up; not to use; there is a sword which *Peter* may use; but it is of another metal; our weapons are, as our warfare, spiritual; if he smite not with this, he incurs no less blame, than for smiting with the other; as for this material sword, what should he do with it that is not allowed to strike? when the prince of peace had his followers sell their coat, and buy a sword, he meant to insinuate the need of these arms, not their improvement; and to teach them the danger of the time, not the manner of the repulse of danger: when they therefore said; *Behold, here are two swords;* he answered, *It is enough;* he said not, Go, buy more; more had not been enough, if a bodily defence had been intended; *David's* tower had been too strait to yield sufficient furniture of this kind; when it comes to use, *Peter's* one sword is too much; *Put up thy sword.* Indeed, there is a temporal sword; and that sword must be drawn; else, wherefore is it?

but, drawn by him that bears it ; and he bears it that is ordained to be an avenger, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil ; for he bears not the sword in vain : If another man draw it, it cuts his fingers ; and draws so much blood of him that unwarrantably weilds it, as that he who takes the sword shall perish with the sword ; can I choose but wonder how *Peter* could thus strike, unwounded ? how he, whose first blow made the fray, could escape hewing in pieces from that band of ruffians ? This could not have been, if thy power, O Saviour, had not restrained their rage ; if thy seasonable, and sharp reproof had not prevented their revenge.

Now, for ought I see, *Peter* smarts no less than *Malchus* ; neither is *Peter's* ear less smitten by the mild tongue of his Master than *Malchus* ear's by the hand of *Peter* ; weak disciple, thou hast zeal, but not according to knowledge ; there is not more danger in this act of thine than inconsideration and ignorance ; the cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it ? Thou drawest thy sword to rescue me from suffering ; alas, if I suffer not, what would become of thee ? what would become of mankind ? where were that eternal and just decree of my Father, wherein I am a Lamb slain from the beginning of the world ? Dost thou go about to hinder thine own, and the whole world's redemption ? Did I not, once before, call thee Satan, for suggesting to me this immunity from my passion, and dost thou now think to favour me with a real opposition to this great and necessary work ? Canst thou be so weak as to imagine that this suffering of mine is not free and voluntary ? Canst thou be so injurious to me as to think I yield, because I want aid to resist ? Have I not given to thee, and to the world many undeniable proofs of my omnipotence ? Didst thou not see how easy it had been for me to have blown away these poor forces of my adversaries ? Dost thou not know that if I would require it, all the glorious  
troops



troops of the angels of heaven (any one whereof is more than worlds of men) would presently show themselves ready to attend, and rescue me? Might this have stood with the justice of my decree, with the glory of my mercy, with the benefit of man's redemption, it had been done; my power should have triumphed over the impotent malice of my enemies, but now since that eternal decree must be accomplished, my mercy must be approved, mankind must be ransomed, and this cannot be done without my suffering; thy well meant valour is no better than a wrong to thyself, to the world, to me, to my Father.

O gracious Saviour, whilst thou thus smitest thy disciple, thou healest him whom thy disciple smote; many greater miracles hadst thou done, none that bewrayed more mercy and meekness than this last cure; of all other, this ear of *Malchus* hath the loudest tongue to blazon the praise of thy clemency and goodness to thy very enemies: wherefore came that man but in an hostile manner to attack thee? Besides his own, what favour was he worthy of, for his master's sake? and if he had not been more forward than his fellows, why had not his skin been as whole as theirs? yet, even amidst the throng of thine apprehenders, in the heat of their violence, in the height of their malice, and thine own instant peril of death, thou healest that unnecessary ear, which had been guilty of hearing blasphemies against thee, and receiving cruel and unjust charges concerning thee. Oh *Malchus*, could thy ear be whole, and not thy heart broken and contrite, with remorse, for rising up against so merciful and so powerful an hand? Couldst thou choose but say, O blessed Jesu, I see it was thy providence that preserved my head, when my ear was smitten; it is thine almighty power, that hath miraculously restored that ear of mine, which I had justly forfeited: this head of mine shall never be guilty of plotting any further mischief against thee; this ear shall

never entertain any more reproaches of thy name, this heart of mine shall ever acknowledge and magnify thy tender mercies, thy divine omnipotence. Could thy fellows see such a demonstration of power and goodness with unrelenting hearts? Unthankful *Malchus*, and cruel soldiers; ye were worse wounded, and felt it not; God had struck your breast with a fearful obduration, that ye still persist in your bloody enterprise; *And they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away, &c.*



#### XLIV. CHRIST *before Caiaphas.*

St. MATT. xxvi. 57,—to the End.

**T**HAT traitor whom his own cord made (soon after) too fast, gave this charge concerning Jesus; *Hold him fast*; fear makes his guard cruel; they bind his hands, and think no twist can be strong enough for this *Sampson*: Fond Jews and soldiers, if his own will had not tyed him faster than your cords, tho' those manacles had been the stiffest cables, or the strongest iron, they had been but threads of tow. What eyes can but run over to see those hands, that made heaven and earth wrung together, and bruised with those merciless cords; see him bound who came to restore us to the liberty of the sons of God; to see the Lord of life contemptuously drag'd thro' the streets, first to the house of *Annas*, then from thence to the house of *Caiaphas*; from him to *Pilate*; from *Pilate* to *Herod*; from *Herod* back again to *Pilate*; from *Pilate* to his *Calvary*: whilst in the mean time, the base rabble and scum of the incensed multitude runs after him, with shouts and scorns? The act of death hath not in it so much misery and horror as the pomp of death.

And

And what needed all this pageant of cruelty ? wherefore was this state and lingring of an unjust execution ? was it for that their malice held a quick dispatch for too much mercy ? was it for that, whilst they meant to be bloody, they would fain seem just ? A sudden violence had been palpably murderous ; now the colour of a legal process guilds over all their deadly spight, and would seem to render them honest and the accused guilty.

This attachment, this convention of the innocent was a true night-work ; a deed of so much darkness was not for the light ; old *Annas*, and that wicked bench of gray-headed scribes and elders can be content to break their sleep to do mischief : envy and malice can make noon of midnight ; it is resolved he shall die ; and now pretence must be sought that he may be cleanly murdered : all evil begins at the sanctuary ; the priests and scribes and elders are the first in this bloody scene ; they have paid for this head, and now long to see what they shall have for their thirty silverlings : the bench is set in the hall of *Caiaphas* ; false witnesses are sought for, and hired ; they agree not, but shame their suborners ; wo is me, what safety can there be for innocence, when the evidence is wilfully corrupted ? what state was ever so pure as not to yield some miscreants, that will either sell, or lend an oath ? what a brand hath the wisdom of God set upon falsehood, even dissonance and distraction ? whereas truth ever holds together, and jars not whilst it is itself. O Saviour, what a perfect innocence was in thy life, what an exact purity in thy doctrine that malice itself cannot so much as devise what to slander ? It were hard if hell should not find some factors upon earth ; at last, two witnesses are brought in, that have learned to agree with themselves, whilst they differed from truth ; they say the same, tho' false ; *This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and build it again in three days* ; perjured wretches ! Were

## 270 CONTEMPLATIONS.

these the terms that you heard from that sacred mouth? Said he formally thus as ye have deposed? It is true, he spake of a temple, of destroying, of building, of three days; but did he speak of that temple, of his own destroying, of a material building in that space? He said, Destroy ye; Ye say, I am able to destroy; He said, this temple of his body; Ye say, the Temple of God; He said, I will make up this Temple of my body in three days; Ye say, I am able in three days to build this material Temple of God; the words were his, the sentence yours: the words were true, the evidence false: So, whilst you report the words, and mis-report the sense, ye swear a real falsehood, and are truly forsworn: where the resolutions are fixed, any colour will serve: Had those words been spoken, they contained no crime; had he been such as they supposed him, a mere man, the speech had carried a semblance of ostentation, no semblance of blasphemy; yet, how vehement is *Caiaphas* for an answer; as if those words had already battered that sacred pile; or the protestation of his ability had been the highest treason against the God of the Temple: That infinite wisdom knew well how little satisfaction there could be in answers, where the sentence was determined; *Jesus held his peace*; where the asker is unworthy, the question captious, words bootless, the best answer is silence.

Ere while his just and moderate speech to *Annas* was returned with a buffet on the cheek, now his silence is no less displeasing. *Caiaphas* was not more malicious than crafty; what was in vain attempted by witnesses, shall be drawn out of Christ's own mouth; what an accusation could not effect, an adjuration shall; *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God*: yea, this was the way to screw out a killing answer. *Caiaphas*, thy mouth was impure, but thy charge is dreadful; now if *Jesus* hold his peace, he is cried down for a  
 prophane



prophane disregard of that awful name; if he answer, he is ensnared; an affirmation is death; a denial worse than death; no *Caiaphas*, thou shalt well know, it was not fear that all this while stopped that gracious mouth; thou speakest to him that cannot fear those faces he hath made; he that hath charged us to confess him, cannot but confess himself; *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said.* There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence; he that is the wisdom of his father hath here given us a pattern of both; we may not so speak as to give advantage to cavils; we may not be so silent, as to betray the truth; thou shalt have no more cause, proud and insulting *Caiaphas*; to complain of a speechless prisoner; now thou shalt hear more than thou demandest; *Hereafter shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.* There spake my Saviour; the voice of God and not of man; hear now, insolent high-priest, and be confounded; that son of man whom thou seest is the son of God whom thou canst not see; that son of man; that son of God, that God and man whom thou now seest standing despicably before thy consistorial seat, in a base dejectedness, him shalt thou once with horror and trembling see majestically sitting on the throne of Heaven, attended with thousand thousands of Angels, and coming in the clouds to that dreadful judgment, wherein thyself amongst other damned malefactors shalt be presented before that glorious tribunal of his, and adjudged to thy just torments.

Go now wretched hypocrite, and rend thy garments; whilst in the mean time thou art worthy to have thy soul rent from thy body, for thy spiteful blasphemy against the son of God; onwards, thy pretence is fair, and such as cannot but receive applause from thy compacted crew; *What need have we of witnesses, behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.*

*What think ye ? and they answered and said, he is guilty of death.*

What heed is to be taken of men's judgments ? So light are they upon the balance, that one dram of prejudice or forestalment turns the scales ; who were these but the grave benchers of *Jerusalem* ; the synod of the choice rabbies of *Israel* ? yet these pass sentence against the Lord of life ; sentence of that death of his, whereby (if ever) they shall be redeemed from the murder of their sentence.

O Saviour, this is not the last time, wherein thou hast received cruel dooms from them that profess learning and holiness ; what wonder is it if thy weak members suffer that, which was indured by so perfect an head ; what care we to be judged by man's day\*, when thou, who art the righteous judge of the world, wert thus misjudged by men ? Now is the fury of thy malignant enemies let loose upon thee ; what measure can be too hard for him, that is denounced worthy of death ? Now, those foul mouths defile thy blessed face with their impure spittle, the venomous froth of their malice ; now those cruel hands are lifted up to buffet thy sacred cheeks ; now scorn and insultation triumphs over thine humble patience, *Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who it is that smote thee.* O dear Jesu, what a beginning is here of a passion ; there thou standest, bound, condemned, spat upon, buffeted, derided by malicious sinners ; thou art bound who camest to loose the bands of death ; thou art condemned whose sentence must acquit the world ; thou art spat upon that art fairer than the sons of men ; thou art buffeted in whose mouth was no guile ; thou art derided who art cloathed with glory and majesty.

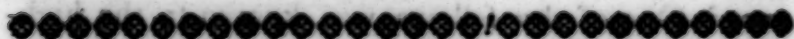
In the mean while, how can I enough wonder at thy infinite mercy, who in the midst of all these woful indignities couldst find a time to cast thine eyes back upon thy frail, and ingrateful disciple ; and in

\* i. e. Judgment. The Greek word for Judgment is *κριμα*—*Day*.  
whose

whose gracious ear *Peter's* cock sounded louder than all these reproaches : O Saviour, thou who in thine apprehension couldst forget all thy danger, to correct and heal his over-lashing ; now in the heat of thy arraignment and condemnation canst forget thy own misery to reclaim his error ; and by that seasonable glance of thine eye, to strike his heart with a needful remorse. He that was lately so valiant to fight for thee, now the next morning is so cowardly as to deny thee ; he shrinks at the voice of a maid, who was not daunted with the sight of a band ; O *Peter*, had thy slip been sudden, thy fall had been more easy ; premonition aggravates thy offence ; that stone was fore-shew'd thee whereat thou stumbledst ; neither did thy warning add more to thy guilt than thine own fore-resolution ; how didst thou vow, though thou shouldest die with thy master, not to deny him ? hadst thou said nothing, but answered with a trembling silence, thy shame had been the less ; good purposes when they are not held, do so far turn enemies to the entertainer of them, as that they help to double both his sin and punishment.

Yet a single denial had been but easy ; thine (I fear to speak it) was lined with swearing, and execration : whence, then, O whence, was this so vehement and peremptory disclamation of so gracious a master ? what such danger had attended thy profession of his attendance ? One of thy fellows was known to the high-priest for a follower of *Jesus* ; yet he not only came himself into that open hall, in view of the bench ; but treated with the maid that kept the door, to let thee in also : she knew him for what he was, and could therefore speak to thee, as brought in by his mediation, *Art not thou also one of the man's disciples ? Thou also*, supposes the first acknowledged such ; yet what crime, what danger was urged upon that noted disciple ? What could have been more to thee ? was it that thy heart misgave thee thou mightest be called to an account for *Malchus* ? It was no thank to thee

hat that ear was healed ; neither did there want those that would think how near that ear was to the head. Doubtless, that busy fellow himself was not far off, and his fellows and kinsmen would have been apt enough to follow thee (besides thy disciple-ship) upon a blood-shed, a riot, a rescue : thy conscience hath made thee thus unduly timorous : and now, to be sure to avoid the imputation of that affray, thou renouncest all knowledge of him in whose cause thou didst fight ; howsoever, the sin was hainous ; I tremble at such a fall of so great an apostle. It was thou, O *Peter*, that buffetedest thy master more than those *Jews* ; it was to thee that he turned the cheek from them, as to view him by whom he most smarted ; he felt thee a far off, and answered thee with a look ; such a look as was able to kill and revive at once : thou hast wounded me (mayest thou now say) O my Saviour, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thine eyes ; that one eye of thy mercy hath wounded my heart with a deep remorse for my grievous sin, with an indignation at my unthankfulness ; that one glance of thine hath resolved me into the tears of sorrow and contrition : O that mine eyes were fountains, and my cheeks channels, that shall never be dried ! *And Peter went out and wept bitterly.*



**XLV. CHRIST *before* PILATE.**

MATT. xxvii. 1----26. &c. and JOHN xviii. 26.  
and xix. 1. &c.

**W**ELL worthy were these *Jews* to be tributary; they had cast off the yoke of their God; and had justly earned this *Roman* servitude: *Tiberius* had befriended them too well with so favourable a governor as *Pilate*: had they had the power of life and death in their hands, they had not been beholden to



an heathen for a legal murder: I know not whether they more repine at this slavery, or please themselves to think how cleanly they can shift off this blood into another's hand. These great masters of *Israel* flock from their own consistory to *Pilate's* judgment-hall; the sentence had been theirs, the execution must be his; and now they hope to bear down *Jesus* with the stream of that frequent confluence.

But, what ails you, O ye rulers of *Israel*, that ye stand thus thronging at the door? Why do ye not go in to that public room of judicature to call for that justice ye came for? Was it for that ye would not defile yourselves with the contagion of an heathen roof? holy men! your consciences would not suffer you to yeild to so impure an act; your passover must be kept, your persons must be clean; whilst ye expect justice from the man, ye abhor the pollution of the place. Wo to you priests, scribes, elders, hypocrites, can there be any roof so unclean as that of your own breasts? Not *Pilate's* walls, but your hearts are impure; is murder your errand, and do you stick at a local infection? God shall smite you ye whited walls; do you long to be stained with blood, with the blood of God, and do ye fear to be defiled with the touch of *Pilate's* pavement? Doth so small a grail stick in your throats, whilst ye swallow such a camel of flagitious wickedness? Go out of yourselves ye false dissemblers, if ye would not be unclean; *Pilate*, onwards, hath more cause to fear lest his walls should be defiled with the presence of so prodigious monsters of impiety.

That plausible governor condescends to humour their superstition; they dare not come in to him; he yeilds to go forth to them. Even *Pilate* begins justly, *What accusation bring you against this man?* It is no judging of religion by the outward demeanor of men; there is more justice amongst *Romans* than amongst *Jews*; the malicious rabbies thought it enough

that

that they had sentenced *Jesus*; no more was now expected but a speedy execution; *If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee*: civil justice must be their hangman; it is enough conviction that he is delivered up to the secular powers; themselves have judg'd, these other must kill; *Pilate* and *Caiaphas* have changed places; this pagan speaks that law and justice, which that high-priest should have done; and that high-priest speaks those murdering incongruities, which would better have beseemed the mouth of a pagan; what needs any new trial? Dost thou know, *Pilate*, who we are? Is this the honour that thou givest to our sacred priesthood? Is this thy valuation of our sanctity? Had the basest of the vulgar complained to thee, thou couldst but have put them to a review; our place and holiness look'd not to be distrusted; if our scrupulous consciences suspect thy very walls, thou mayest well think there is small reason to suspect our consciences; upon a full hearing, ripe deliberation, and exquisitely-judicial proceeding, we have sentenced this malefactor to death; there needs no more from thee, but thy command of execution. O monster, whether of malice, or unjustice! Must he then be a malefactor whom ye will condemn? Is your bare word ground enough to shed blood? Whom did you ever kill but the righteous? By whose hands perished the prophets? The word was but mistaken; ye should have said, if we had not been malefactors, we had never delivered up this innocent man unto thee.

It must needs be notoriously unjust, which very nature hath taught pagans to abhor. *Pilate* sees, and hates this bloody suggestion and practice: do ye pretend holiness and urge so injurious a violence? If he be such as ye accuse him, where is his conviction? If he cannot be legally convicted, why should he die? Do you think I may take your complaint for a crime? If I must judge for you, why have you judged for your-

yourselfes? Could ye suppose that I would condemn any man unheard? If your *Jewish* laws yield you this liberty, the *Roman* laws yield it not me; it is not for me to judge after your laws, but after our own; your prejudgment may not sway me; since ye have gone so far, be ye your own carvers of justice; *Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.*

O *Pilate*, how happy had it been for thee, if thou hadst held thee there, thus thou hadst washed thy hands more clean than in all thy basons: might law have been the rule of this judgment, and not malice, this blood had not been shed; how palpably doth their tongue bewray their heart? *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death*; *Pilate* talks of judgment, they talk of death; this was their only aim; law was but a colour, judgment was but a ceremony; death was their drift; and without this, nothing; blood-thirsty priests and elders, it is well that this power of yours is restrained; no innocence could have been safe, if your lawless will had had no limits; it were pity this sword should be in any but just, and sober hands; your fury did not always consult with law; what law allowed your violence to *Stephen*, to *Paul* and *Barnabas*? and your deadly attempts against this blessed *Jesus* whom ye now prosecute? How lawful was it for you to procure that death, which ye could not inflict? It is all the care of hypocrites to seek umbrages and pretences for their hateful purposes; and to make no other use of laws (whether divine or human) but to serve turns.

Where death is fore-resolved, there cannot want accusations; malice is not so barren as not to yeild crimes enough; *And they began to accuse him, saying. we found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute unto Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ and King.*

What accusations saidst thou, O *Pilate*? Hainous and capital; thou mightest have believed our confid-

dent

dent intimation ; but since thou wilt needs urge us to particulars, know that we come furnished with such an inditement as shall make thine ears glow to hear it ; Besides that blasphemy whereof he hath been condemned by us, this man is a seducer of the people, a raiser of sedition, an usurper of sovereignty. O impudent suggestion ! what marvel is it, O Saviour, if thine honest servants be loaded with slanders, when thy most innocent person escaped not so shameful criminations ? Thou a perverter of the nation, who taughtest the way of God truly ? Thou a forbidder of tribute, who payedst it, who prescribedst it, who provedst it to be *Cæsar's* due ? Thou a challenger of temporal sovereignty, who avoidest it, renouncedst it, professedst to come to serve ? Oh the forehead of malice ! Go ye shameless traducers, and swear that truth is guilty of all falsehood, justice of all wrong ; and that the sun is the only cause of darkness ; fire of cold.

Now *Pilate* startles at the charge. The name of tribute, the name of *Cæsar* is in mention ; these potent spells can fetch him back to the common hall ; and call Jesus to the bar : There, O Saviour, standest thou meekly to be judged, who shalt once come to judge the quick and the dead ; then shall he before whom thou stoodst guiltless and dejected, stand before thy dreadful majesty, guilty and trembling.

The name of a King, of *Cæsar*, is justly tender and awful ; the least whisper of an usurpation, or disturbance, is entertained with a jealous care. *Pilate* takes this intimation at the first bound ; *Art thou then the King of the Jews ?* He felt his own freehold now touched, it was time for him to stir : *Daniel's* weeks were now famously known to be near expiring : Many arrogant and busy spirits (as *Judas of Galilee*, *Theudas*, and that *Egyptian* seducer) taking that advantage, had raised several conspiracies, set up new titles to the crown, gathered forces to maintain their false claims ;



perhaps *Pilate* supposed some such business now on foot, and therefore asks so curiously, *Art thou the King of the Jews?*

He that was no less wisdom than truth, thought it not best, either to affirm or deny at once; sometimes it may be extremely prejudicial to speak all truths: to disclaim that title suddenly, which had been of old given him by the Prophets, at his Birth by the eastern sages, and now lately at his procession by the acclaiming multitude, had been injurious to himself: To profess and challenge it absolutely, had been unsafe, and needlessly provoking; by wise and just degrees therefore doth he so affirm this truth, that he both satisfies the inquirer, and takes off all peril and prejudice from his assertion; *Pilate* shall know him a king, but such a king as no king needs to fear, as all kings ought to acknowledge and adore: *My kingdom is not of this world*: it is your mistaking, O ye earthly potentates, that is guilty of your fears: *Herod* hears of a king born, and is troubled; *Pilate* hears of a king of the *Jews* and is incensed; were ye not ignorant, ye could not be jealous: had ye learned to distinguish of kingdoms, these suspicions would vanish.

There are secular kingdoms, there are spiritual; neither of these trenches upon other: your kingdom is secular, Christ's is spiritual; both may, both must stand together; his laws are divine, yours civil: his reign is eternal, yours temporal; the glory of his rule is inward and stands in the graces of sanctification, love, peace, righteousness, joy in the holy Ghost, yours in outward pomp, riches, magnificence: His enemies are the devil, the world, the flesh, yours are bodily usurpers, and external peace-breakers: his sword is the power of the word and spirit, yours material; his rule is over the conscience, yours over bodies and lives; he punishes with hell, ye with temporal death or torture: Yea so far is he from opposing  
your

your government, that by him ye Kings reign ; your sceptres are his ; but to maintain, not to weild, not to resist : Oh the unjust fears of vain men ; he takes not away your earthly kingdoms who gives you heavenly ; he discrowns not the body, who crowns the soul ; his intention is not to make you less great, but more happy.

The charge is so fully answered, that *Pilate* acquits the prisoner : the Jewish masters stand still without ; their very malice dares not venture their pollution, in going in to prosecute their accusation ; *Pilate* hath examined him within ; and now comes forth to these eager complainants, with a cold answer to their over-hot expectation ; *I find in him no fault at all* : O noble testimony of Christ's innocence, from that mouth, which afterwards doomed him to death : what a difference there is betwixt a man, as he is himself, and as he is the servant of others wills ; It is *Pilate's* tongue that says, *I find in him no fault at all* : it is the *Jews* tongue in *Pilate's* mouth that says, *Let him be crucified* ; that cruel sentence cannot blot him whom this attestation cleareth, neither doth he say, I find him not guilty in that whereof he is accused ; but gives an universal acquittance of the whole carriage of Christ, *I find in him no fault at all* ; in spite of malice, innocence shall find abettors ; rather than Christ shall want witnesses, the mouth of *Pilate* shall be opened to his justification : How did these Jewish blood-suckers stand thunder-stricken with so unexpected a word ? His absolution was their death ; his acquittal their conviction ; no fault, when we have found crimes ? no fault at all, when we have condemned him for capital offences ? How palpably doth *Pilate* give us the lye ? How shamefully doth he affront our authority, and disparage our justice ? So ingenuous a testimony doubtless exasperated the fury of these *Jews* ; the fire of their indignation was seven-fold more intended with the sense of their repulse.

I tremble .

I tremble to think how just *Pilate* as yet was (and how soon after depraved) yea how merciful together with that justice ; How fain would he have freed Jesus, whom he found faultless ? Corrupt custom, in memory of their deliverance from *Egyptian* bondage, allowed to gratify the *Jews* with the free delivery of some one prisoner (Tradition would be incroaching ; the Paschal Lamb was monument enough of that happy rescue ; men affect to have something of their own) *Pilate* was willing to take this advantage of dismissing Jesus : that he might be the more likely to prevail, he proposeth him with the choice and nomination of so notorious a malefactor, as he might justly think incapable of all mercy ; *Barabbas*, a thief, a murderer, a seditionary, infamous for all, odious to all ; had he propounded some other innocent prisoner, he might have feared the election would be doubtful ; he cannot misdoubt the competition of so prodigious a malefactor ; *Then they all cried again ; Not him but Barabbas.*

O malice beyond all example, shameless, and bloody ; who can but blush to think that an heathen should see *Jews* so impetuously unjust, so savagely cruel ; he knew there was no fault to be found in Jesus ; he knew there was no crime that was not to be found in *Barabbas* ; yet he hears (and blushes to hear) them say, *Not him, but Barabbas.* Was not this (think we) out of similitude of condition ? Every thing affects the like to itself ; every thing affects the preservation of that it liketh ? what wonder is it then, if ye *Jews*, who profess yourselves the murderer of that just One, favour a *Barabbas* ? O Saviour, what a killing indignity was this, for thee to hear from thine own nation ? Hast thou refused all glory, to put on shame and misery for their sakes ? hast thou disregarded thy blessed self to save them ; and do they refuse thee for *Barabbas* ? Hast thou said ; Not heaven, but earth ; not sovereignty, but service ; not the

the Gentile, but the Jew ; and do they say, Not him, but *Barabbas* ? Do ye thus requite the Lord, O ye foolish people and unjust ? Thus were thine ears and thine eyes first crucified ; and thro' them was thy soul wounded, even to death, before thy death : whilst thou saw'st their rage, and heardst their noise of *Crucify, crucify*.

*Pilate* would have chastised thee ; even that had been a cruel mercy from him ; for what evil hadst thou done ? but that cruelty had been true mercy to this of the *Jews* ; whom no blood would satisfy but that of thy heart. He calls for thy fault, they call for thy punishment ; as proclaiming thy crucifixion is not intended to satisfy justice, but malice ; *They cried the more, Crucify him, crucify him*.

As their clamour grew so the president's justice declined ; those graces that lie loose and ungrounded are easily wash'd away with the first tide of popularity ; thrice had that man proclaimed the innocence of him whom he now inclines to condemn ; *willing to content the people* ; oh the foolish aims of ambition ; not God, not his conscience come into any regard ; but the people : what a base idol doth the proud man adore ? even the vulgar, which a base man despiseth : what is their applause but an idle wind ? what is their anger but a painted fire ; O *Pilate* where now is thy self and thy people ? whereas a good conscience would have stuck by thee for ever, and have given thee boldness before the face of that God, which thou and thy people shall never have the happiness to behold.

The *Jews* have played their first part ; the *Gentiles* must now act theirs : cruel *Pilate* who knew *Jesus* was delivered for envy, accused falsely, maliciously pursued ; hath turned his proffered chastisement into scourging ; *Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him* ; wo is me, dear Saviour, I feel thy lashes ; I shrink under thy painful whippings ; thy nakedness covers me with shame and confusion : that tender and precious  
body



body of thine is galled and torn with cords ; thou that didst of late water the garden of *Gethsemane* with the drops of thy bloody sweat, dost now bedew the pavement of *Pilate's* hall with the showers of thy blood ; how fully hast thou made good thy word, *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, I hid not my face from shame and spitting.* How can I be enough sensible of my own stripes ? These blows are mine ; both my sins have given them, and they give remedies to my sins ; *he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes are we healed.* O blessed *Jesu*, why should I think strange to be scourged with tongue or hand, when I see thee bleeding ? What lashes can I fear either from heaven or earth, since thy scourges have been borne for me, and have sanctified them to me ? Now dear *Jesu*, what a world of insolent reproaches, indignities, tortures, art thou entering into ? To an ingenious and tender disposition scorns are torment enough ; but here, pain helps to perfect thy misery, their despatch.

Who should be actors in this whole bloody execution, but grim and barbarous soldiers, men inured to cruelty ; in whose faces were written the characters of murder ; whose very trade was killing ; and whose looks were enough to prevent their hands. These, for the greater terror of their concourse, are called together ; and whether by the connivance or the command of their wicked governor, or by the instigation of the malicious *Jews*, conspire to anticipate his death with scorns, which they will after inflict with violence.

O my blessed Saviour, was it not enough that thy sacred body was stripped of thy garments, and wailed with bloody stripes ; but that thy person must be made the mocking stock of thine insulting enemies ? Thy back disguised with purple robes, thy temples wounded with a thorny crown ; thy face spat upon ; thy cheeks

cheeks buffeted, thy head smitten ; thy hand scepter-  
ed with a reed ; thyself derided with wry-mouths ;  
bended knees, scoffing acclamations ? Insolent soldiers,  
whence is all this jeering and sport, but to flout ma-  
jesty ? All these are the ornaments and ceremonies of  
a royal inauguration, which now in scorn ye cast up-  
on my despised Saviour ; go on, make yourselv'es merry  
with this jolly pastime : alas, long ago ye now feel  
whom ye scorned ; is he a king, think you, whom  
ye thus play'd upon ? Look upon him with gnash-  
ing and horror, whom ye looked at with mockage  
and insultation ; was not that head fit for your thorns  
which you now see crowned with glory, and majesty ?  
Was not that hand fit for a reed, whose iron scepter  
crushes you to death ? Was not that face fit to be spat  
upon, from the dreadful aspect whereof ye are ready  
to desire the mountains to cover you ?

In the mean time, whither, O whither dost thou  
sloop O thou coeternal son of thine eternal Father ;  
whither dost thou abase thyself for me ? I have sinned,  
and thou art punished ; I have exalted myself, and  
thou art dejected ; I have clad myself with shame,  
and thou art stripped ; I have made myself naked,  
and thou art cloathed with robes of dishonour ; my  
head hath devised evil, and thine is pierced with  
thorns ; I have smitten thee, and thou art smitten for  
me ; I have dishonoured thee, and thou for my sake  
art scorned ; thou art made the sport of men, for me,  
that have deserved to be insulted on by devils.

Thus disguised, thus bleeding, thus mangled, thus  
deformed art thou brought forth, whether for com-  
passion, or for a more universal derision, to the furi-  
ous multitude, with an *Ecce homo, Behold the man* ;  
look upon him O ye merciless *Jews* ; see him in his  
shame, in his wounds and blood, and now see whe-  
ther ye think him miserable enough ; ye see his face  
blue and black with buffeting, his eyes swoln, his  
cheeks besmeared with spittle, his skin torn with  
scourges

scourges, his whole body bathed in blood ; and would ye yet have more ? *Behold the man*, the man whom ye envied for his greatness, whom ye feared for his usurpation ; Doth he not look like a king ; is he not royally dressed ? See whether his magnificence do not command reverence from you ; would ye wish a finer King ? Are ye not afraid he will wrest the scepter out of *Cæsar's* hand ? *Behold the man*.

Yea, and behold him well ; O thou proud *Pilate*, O ye cruel soldiers O ye insatiable *Jews* ; ye see him base , whom ye shall see glorious ; the time shall surely come wherein ye shall see him in another dress ; he shall shine whom ye now see to bleed, his crown cannot be now so ignominious and painful, as it shall be once majestical and precious ; ye who now bend your knees to him in scorn, shall see all knees both in heaven and in earth, and under the earth to bow before him in awful adoration ; ye that now see him with contempt, shall behold him with horror.

What an inward war do I yet find in the breast of *Pilate* ? His conscience bids him spare, his popularity bids him kill ; His wife warned by a dream, warns him to have no hand in the blood of that just man ; the importunate multitude presses him for a sentence of death ; all shifts have been tried to free the man, whom he hath pronounced innocent ; all violent motives are urged to condemn that man, whom malice pretends guilty.

In the height of this strife ; when conscience and moral justice were ready to sway *Pilate's* distracted heart to a just dismissal ; I hear the *Jews* cry out, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend* ; there is the word that strikes it dead ; it is now no time to demur any more ; in vain shall we hope that a carnal heart can prefer the care of his soul, to the care of his safety and honour ; God, to *Cæsar* : Now *Jesus* must die ; *Pilate* hastes into the Judgment-hall

hall ; the sentence strickno longer with him, *Let him be crucified.*

Yet how foul so ever his soul shall be with this fact, his hands shall he clean ; *He took water and washt his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it;* now, all is safe ; I suppose, this is expiation enough ; water can wash off blood ; the hands can cleanse the heart ; protest thou art innocent, and thou canst not be guilty ; Vain hypocrite ! canst thou think to scape so ? Is murder of no deeper dye ? Canst thou dream waking, thus to avoid the charge of thy wife's dream ? Is the guilt of the blood of the son of God to be wip'd off with such ease ? What poor shifts do foolish sinners make to beguile themselves ? Any thing will serve to charm the conscience, when it lists to sleep.

But O Saviour, whilst *Pilate* thinks to wash off the guilt of thy blood with water ; I know there is nothing that can wash off the guilt of this his sin, but thy blood ; oh do thou wash my soul in that precious bath, and I shall be clean ; O *Pilate*, if that very blood which thou sheddest, do not wash off the guilt of thy bloodshed ; thy water doth but more defile thy soul, and intend that fire wherewith thou burnest.

Little did the desperate *Jews* know the weight of that blood, which they were so forward to wish upon themselves, and their children ; had they deprecated, their interest in that horrible murder, they could not so easily have avoided the vengeance ; but now, that they fetch it upon themselves. by a willing execration, what should I say, but that they long for a curse: it is pity they should not be miserable : And, have ye not now felt, O nation worthy of plagues, have ye not now felt what blood it was whose guilt ye affected ? Sixteen hundred years are now passed since you wished yourself thus wretched ; have ye not been ever since the hate and scorn of the world ? Did ye not  
live



live (many of you) to see your city buried in ashes, and drowned in blood ? to see yourselves no nation ? was there ever people under heaven that was made so famous a spectacle of misery and desolation ? Have ye yet enough of that blood which ye called for upon yourselves and your children ? Your former cruelties, uncleannesses, idolatries cost you but some short captivities ; God cannot but be just ; this sin under which you now lie groaning and forlorn, must needs be so much greater than these, as your vastation is more ; and what can that be other than the murder of the Lord of life ? Ye have what ye wished, be miserable till ye be penitent.

XLVI. *The CRUCIFIXION.*

MATT. xxvii. 27. &c. See LUKE and the Evangelists, especially JOHN xix. 17. &c.

THE sentence of death is past, and now who can with dry eyes behold the sad pomp of my Saviour's bloody execution ? All the streets are full of gazing spectators, waiting for this rueful sight : At last, O Saviour, there thou comest out of *Pilate's* gate, bearing that which shall soon bear thee ; To expect thy cross was not torment enough, thou must carry it ; all this while, thou shalt not only see, but feel thy death before it come ; and must help to be an agent in thine own passion ; it was not out of favour, that those scornful robes being stripped off, thou art led to death in thine own cloaths ; So was thy face besmeared with blood, so swollen and discoloured with buffetings, that thou couldst not have been known, but by thy wonted habit ; Now thine insulting enemies are so much more imperiously cruel, as they are more sure of their success. Their merciless tormentings have made thee half dead already : yet now, as if they

they had done nothing, they begin afresh and will force thy weakned, and fainting nature to new tasks of pain; the transverse of thy cross (at least) is upon thy shoulder; when thou canst scarce go, thou must carry; one kicks thee with his foot; another strikes thee with his staff; another drags thee hastily by thy cord, and, more than one, spur on thine unpittied weariness with angry commands of haste; oh true form and state of a servant! All thy former actions, O Saviour, were (tho' painful, yet) free; this, as it is in itself servile, so it is tyrannously enforced; Enforced yet more upon thee, by thy own love to mankind, than by their power and despight; it was thy Father that laid upon thee the iniquity of us all; it was thine own mercy that caused thee to bear our sins upon the cross and to bear the cross (with the curse annexed to it) for our sins. How much more voluntary must that needs be in thee, which thou requirest to be voluntarily undertaken by us; it was thy charge, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*: thou didst not say, Let him bear his cross, as forceably imposed by another, but, Let him take up his cross, as his free burden; free in respect of his heart, not in respect of his hand; so free, that he shall willingly undergo it, when it is laid upon him; not so free as that he shall lay it upon himself, unrequired: O Saviour, thou didst not snatch the cross out of the soldiers hands, and cast it upon thy shoulder; but when they laid it on thy neck, thou underwentst it; the constraint was theirs; the will was thine; it was not so heavy to them, or to *Simon*, as it was to thee; they felt nothing but the wood, thou feltest it clogged with the load of the sins of the whole world; no marvel if thou faintedst under that sad burden; thou that bearest up the whole earth by thy word, didst sweat, and pant, and groan under this unsupportable carriage; O blessed Jesu, how could I be

con-

confounded in myself to see thee, after so much loss of blood, and over toiledness of pain, languishing under that fatal tree ; and yet, why should it more trouble me to see thee sinking under thy cross now, than to see thee anon hanging upon thy cross ? In both, thou wouldst render thyself weak and miserable, that thou mightst so much the more glorify thy infinite mercy in suffering.

It is not out of any compassion of thy misery, or care of thine ease, that *Simon of Cyrene* is forced to be the porter of thy cross : it was out of their own eagerness of thy dispatch : thy feeble paces were too slow for their purpose ; their thirst after thy blood made them impatient of delay ; if thou have wearily struggled with the burden of thy shame, all along the streets of *Jerusalem*, when thou comest once past the gates, an helper shall be deputed to thee ; the expedition of thy death was more sweet to them than the pain of a lingering passage ; what thou saidst to *Judas*, they say to the executioner, *What thou doest, do quickly* : whilst thou yet livest they cannot be quiet, they cannot be safe ; to hasten thine end, they lighten thy carriage.

Hadst thou done this out of choice, which thou didst out of constraint, how I should have envied thee, O *Simon of Cyrene*, as too happy in the honour to be the first man, that bore that cross of thy Saviour, wherein millions of blessed Martyrs, have (since that time) been ambitious to succeed thee : thus to bear thy cross for thee, O Saviour, was more than to bear a crown from thee ; could I be worthy to be thus graced by thee, I should pity all other glories.

Whilst thou thus passest, O dear *Jesu*, the streets and ways resound not all with one note ; if the malicious *Jews*, and cruel soldiers insulted upon thee, and either haled or railed thee, on, with a bitter violence, thy faithful followers were no less loud in their moans and ejulations ; neither would they endure that

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the noise of their cries and lamentations should be drowned with the clamour of those reproaches : but especially, thy blessed mother, and those other zealous associates of her own sex, were most passionate in their wailings ; and why should I think, that all that devout multitude, which so lately cried *Hosanna* in the streets, did not also bear their part in these public condolences ? Tho' it had not concerned thyself, O Saviour, thine ears had been still more open to the voice of grief than of malice ; and so thy lips also are open to the one, shut to the other ; *Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children* ; who would not have thought, O Saviour, that thou shouldst have been wholly taken up with thine own sorrows ; the expectation of so bitter a death had been enough to have overwhelmed any soul but thine ; yet even now can thy gracious eye find time to look beyond thine own miseries, at theirs, and to pity them, who, insensible of their own insuing condition, mourned for thine now present ; they see thine extremity, thou seest theirs ; they pour out their sorrow upon thee, thou divertest it upon themselves ; we silly creatures walk blindfolded in this vale of tears, and little know what evil is towards us ; only what we feel we know ; and, whilst we feel nothing, can find leisure to bestow our commiseration on those, who need it perhaps less than ourselves. Even now, O Saviour, when thou wert within the view of thy *Calvary*, thou canst foresee and pity the vastation of thy *Jerusalem* ; and givest a sad prophecy of the imminent destruction of that city which lately had cost thee tears, and now shall cost thee blood, it is not all the undeserved cruelty of men, that can rob thee of thy mercy

*Jerusalem* could not want malefactors, tho' *Be-rabbes* was dismissed ; that all this execution might seem to be done out of the zeal of justice, two capital offenders, adjudged to their gibbet, shall accom-



company thee, O Saviour, both to thy death, and in it: They are led manacled after thee, as less criminal; no stripes had disabled them from bearing their own crosses. Long ago was this unmeet society foretold by thy evangelical Seer; *He was taken from prison, and from judgment; he was cut out of the land of the living; he made his grave with the wicked.* O blessed Jesu, it had been disparagement enough to thee, to be sorted with the best of men (since there is much sin in the perfectest, and there could be no sin in thee,) but to be matched with the scum of mankind, whom vengeance would not let to live, is such an indignity, as confounds my thoughts; surely, there is no angel in heaven, but would have been proud to attend thee; and what could the earth afford worthy of thy train? yet malice hath suited thee with company next to hell; that their viciousness might reflect upon thee, and their sin might stain thine innocence; ye are deceived, O ye fond Judges; this is the way to grace your dying malefactors; this is not the way to disgrace him, whose guiltlessness and perfection triumph'd over your injustice: his presence was able to make your thieves happy; their presence could no more blemish him than your own: Thus guarded, thus attended, thus accompanied, art thou blessed Jesu, led to that loathsome and infamous hill, which now thy last blood shall make sacred; now thou settest thy foot upon that rising ground, which shalt prevent thine *Olivet*, whence thy soul shall first ascend into thy glory.

There whilst thou art addressing thyself for thy last act; thou art presented with that bitter, and farewell-potion, wherewith dying malefactors were wont to have their senses stupified, that they might not feel the torments of their execution; it was but the common mercy of men to alleviate the death of offenders; since the intent of their last doom is not so much pain, as dissolution.

That draught, O Saviour, was not more welcome to the guilty, than hateful unto thee ; in the vigour of all thine inward and outward senses, thou wouldst incounter the most violent assaults of death ; and scornedst to abate the least touch of thy quickest apprehension ; Thou well knewest that the work thou wentest about, would require the use of all thy powers ; it was not thine ease that thou soughtest, but our redemption ; neither meantest thou to yield to thy last enemy, but to resist, and to overcome him ; which that thou mightst do the more gloriously, thou challengedst him to do his worst ; and in the mean time wouldst not disfurnish thyself of any of thy powerful faculties ; this greatest combat that ever was shall be fought on even hand ; neither would thou steal that victory which thou now atchievedst over death and hell ; Thou didst but touch at this cup ; it is a far bitterer than this, that thou art now drinking up to the dregs ; thou refusedst that which was offered thee by men, but that which was mixed by thine eternal Father, (though mere gall, and wormwood) thou didst drink up to the last drop ; and therein, O blessed Jesu, lies all our health and salvation ; I know not whether I do more suffer in thy pain, or joy in the issue of thy suffering.

Now, even now, O Saviour, art thou entering into those dreadful lists ; and now art thou grappling with thy last enemy as if thou hadst not suffered till now, now thy bloody passion begins ; a cruel expoliation begins that violence : Again do these grim and merciless soldiers lay their rude hands upon thee, and strip thee naked ; again are those bleeding wounds laid open to all eyes ; again must thy sacred body undergo the shame of an abhorred nakedness ; Lo, thou that clovest man with rayment, beasts with hides, fishes with scales and shells, earth with flowers, heaven with stars, art despoiled of cloaths, and standest exposed to the scorn of all beholders : As the first *Adam* entred

entred into his Paradise, so dost thou (the second *Adam*) into thine, naked ; and as the first *Adam* was cloathed with innocence, when he had no cloaths, so wert thou the second, too ; and more than so ; thy nakedness, O Saviour, cloaths our souls, not with innocence only, but with beauty : Hadst not thou been naked, we had been cloathed with confusion ; O happy nakedness, whereby we are covered from shame ; O happy shame, whereby we are invested with glory. All the beholders stand wrapped with warm garments, thou only art stripped to tread the wine press alone : How did thy blessed mother now with her veil upon thy shoulders ; and that disciple, who lately ran from thee naked, wisht in vain that his loving pity might do that for thee, which fear forced him to for himself.

Shame is succeeded with pain ; O the torment of the cross ; Methinks, I see, and feel, how having fastned the transverse to the body of that fatal tree, and laid it upon the ground, they racked and strained thy tender and sacred limbs, to fit the extent of their fore-appointed measure : and having tentered out thine arms beyond their natural reach ; how they fastned them with cords, till those strong iron nails (which were driven up to the head, through the palms of thy blessed hands) had not, more firmly, than painfully, fixed thee to the gibbet ; the tree is raised up, and now not without a vehement concussion settled in the mortise. Wo is me, how are thy joints, and sinews torn, and stretched till they crack again, by this torturing distension ? how doth thine own weight torment thee, whilst thy whole body rests upon this forced and dolorous hold ; till thy nailed feet bear their part in a no less afflictive supportation ; how did the rough iron pierce thy soul, whilst passing thro' those tender and sensible parts, it carried thy flesh before it, and as it were rivetted it to that shameful tree.

There now, O dear Jesu, there thou hangest, between heaven and earth, naked, bleeding, forlorn, despicable, the spectacle of miseries, the scorn of men. Be abashed, O ye heavens and earth, and all ye creatures wrap up yourselves in horror and confusion, to see the shame, and pain, and curse, of your most pure, and omnipotent creator; how could ye subsist, whilst he thus suffers in whom ye are? O Saviour, didst thou take flesh for our redemption to be thus indignly used, thus mangled, thus tortured? Was this measure fit to be offered to that sacred body, that was conceived by the holy Ghost of the pure substance of an immaculate virgin? Wo is me, that which was unspotted with sin, is all blemished with human cruelty; and so wofully disfigured, that the blessed mother that bore thee, could not now have known thee; so bloody were thy temples, so swollen and discoloured was thy face; so was the skin of thy whole body streaked with red and blue stripes; so did thy thorny diadem shade thine heavenly countenance; so did the streams of thy blood cover, and deform all thy parts; the eye of sense could not distinguish thee, O dear Saviour, in the nearest proximity to thy cross; the eye of faith sees thee in all this distance; and by how much more ignominy, deformity, pain it finds in thee, so much more it admires the glory of thy mercy. Alas, is this the head that is decked by thine eternal Father with a crown of pure gold, of immortal and incomprehensible majesty, which is now bushed with thorns? Is this the eye, that saw the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost descending upon that head; that saw such resplendence of heavenly brightness on mount *Taber*, which now begins to be over-clouded with death? Are these the ears that heard the voice of thy Father, owning thee out of heaven; which now tingle with buffetings, and glow with reproaches, and bleed with thorns? Are these the lips that spake



as never man's spake, full of grace and power; that called out dead *Lazarus*; that ejected the stubbornest devils; that commanded the cure of all diseases, which now are swoln with blows, and discoloured with blueness and blood? Is this the face that should be fairer than the sons of men, which the angels of heaven so desired to see, and can never be satisfied with seeing; that is thus foul with the nasty mixtures of sweat, and blood, and spittings on? Are these the hands that stretched out the heavens as a curtain, that by their touch healed the lame, the deaf, the blind; which are now bleeding with the nails? Are these the feet which walked lately upon the liquid pavement of the sea, before whose footstool all the nations of the earth are bidden to worship; that are now so painfully fixed to the cross? O cruel, and unthankful mankind, that offered such measure to the Lord of life! O infinitely merciful Saviour, that wouldst suffer all this for unthankful mankind! That fiends should do these things to guilty souls, it is (though terrible, yet) just; but that men should do thus to the blessed Son of God, it is beyond the capacity of our horror.

Even the most hostile dispositions have been only content to kill; death hath sated the most eager malice; thine enemies, O Saviour, held not themselves satisfied, unless they might enjoy thy torment. Two thieves are appointed to be thy companions in death; thou art designed to the midst, as the chief malefactor; on whether hand soever thou lookest, thine eye meets with an hateful partner; but, O blessed Jesu, how shall I enough admire, and celebrate thy infinite mercy, who madest so happy an use of this Jewish despight, as to improve it to the occasion of the salvation of one, and the comfort of millions? Is not this, as the last, so the greatest specialty of thy wonderful compassion, to convert that dying thief?

with those nailed hands to snatch a soul out of the mouth of hell? Lord, how I bless thee for this work, how do I stand amazed at this, above all other the demonstrations of thy goodness and power? The offender came to die; nothing was in his thoughts but his guilt and torment; whilst he was yet in his blood, thou saidst, *This soul shall live*: Ere yet, the intoxicating potion could have time to work upon his brain, thy spirit infuses faith into his heart; he that, before, had nothing in his eye but present death and torture is now lifted up above his cross, in a blessed ambition; *Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*. Is this the voice of a thief, or of a disciple? Give me leave, O Saviour, to borrow thine own words; *Verily I have not found so great faith, no not in all Israel*. He saw thee hanging miserably by him, and yet stiles thee *Lord*; he saw thee dying, yet talks of thy kingdom; he felt himself dying, yet talks of a future remembrance; O faith stronger than death, that can look beyond the cross, at a crown; beyond dissolution, at a remembrance of life and glory; which of thine eleven were heard to speak so gracious a word to thee in these thy last pangs! After thy resurrection and knowledge of thine impassible condition, it was not strange for them to talk of thy kingdom; but in the midst of thy shameful death, for a dying malefactor to speak of thy reigning; and to implore thy remembrance of himself in thy kingdom, it is such an improvement of faith, as ravilbeth my soul with admiration: O blessed thief that hast thus happily stolen heaven; how worthy hath thy Saviour made thee to be a partner of his sufferings, a pattern of undauntable belief, a spectacle of unspeakable mercy? *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*: Before, I wondred at thy faith; now, I envy at thy felicity; Thou cravdest a remembrance, thy Saviour speaks of a present possession, *This day*; thou suedst for  
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remembrance as a favour to the absent, thy Saviour speaks of thy presence with him ; thou speakest of a kingdom, thy Saviour, of paradise ; as no disciple could be more faithful, so no saint could be happier. O Saviour what a precedent is this of thy free and powerful grace ! where thou wilt give, what unworthiness can bar us from mercy ? when thou wilt give, what time can prejudice our vocation ? who can despair of thy goodness, when he, that in the morning was posting towards hell, is in the evening with thee in paradise. Lord, he could not have spoken this to thee, but by thee, and from thee. What possibility was there for a thief to think of thy kingdom, without thy spirit ? that good spirit of thine breathed upon this man, breathed not upon his fellow ; their trade was alike, their sin was alike, their state alike, their cross alike ; only thy mercy makes them unlike ; one is taken, the other is refused ; blessed be thy mercy in taking one ; blessed be thy justice in leaving the other ; who can despair of that mercy, who cannot but tremble at that justice ?

Now, O ye cruel Priests and Elders of the *Jews*, ye have full leisure to feed your eyes with the sight ye so much longed for ; there is the blood ye purchased ; and is not your malice yet glutted ? Is not all this enough without your taunts and scoffs, and sports at so exquisite a misery ? The people, the passengers are taught to insult, where they should pity ; every man hath a scorn ready to cast at a dying innocent ; a generous nature is more wounded with the tongue than with the hand ; O Saviour, thine ear was more painfully pierced than thy brows, or hands or feet ; it could not but go deep into thy soul, to hear these bitter and girding reproaches from them thou camest to save.

But, alas, what fleabittings were these in comparison, of those inward torments, which thy soul felt, in the sense and apprehension of thy father's wrath for the

sins of the whole world ; which now lay heavy upon thee for satisfaction ? This, oh, this was it that pressed thy soul as it were to the nethermost hell ; whilst thine eternal Father look'd lovingly upon thee, what didst thou, what neededst thou to care for the frowns of men or devils ? but when he once turned his face from thee, or beat his brows upon thee, this, this was worse than death ; it is no marvel, now, if darkness were upon the face of the whole earth, when thy Father's face was eclipsed from thee by the interposition of our sins. How should there be light in the world without, when the God of the world, the Father of lights, complains of the want of light within ? That word of thine, O Saviour, was enough to fetch the sun down out of heaven, and to dissolve the whole frame of nature, when thou criest, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* Oh what pangs were these, dear Jesu, that drew from thee this complaint ? thou well knewest, nothing could be more cordial to thine enemies, than to hear this sad language from thee ; they could see but the outside of thy sufferings, never could they have conceived so deep an anguish of thy soul, if thy own lips had not expressed it ; yet, as not regarding their triumph, thou thus pourest out thy sorrow ; and when so much is uttered, who can conceive what is felt ?

How is it then, with thee, O Saviour, that thou thus astonishest men and angels with so woful a quiritation : had thy God left thee ? Thou, not long since, saidst, *I and my Father are one* ; are ye now severed ? Let this thought be as far from my soul, as my soul from hell ; no more can thy blessed Father be separated from thee, than from his own essence ; his union with thee is eternal ; his vision was intercepted ; he could not withdraw his presence, he would withdraw the influence of his comfort ; thou, the second *Adam*, stoodst for mankind upon this tree of the



the cross, as the first *Adam* stood and fell for mankind, under the tree of offence; thou barest our sin; thy Father saw us in thee, and would punish us in thee, thee for us; how could he but with bold comfort, where he intended chastisement? Herein, therefore, he seems to forsake thee for the present; in that he would not deliver thee from that bitter passion, which thou wouldst undergo for us. O Saviour, hadst thou not been thus forsaken, we had perished; thy dereliction is our safety; and however our narrow souls are not capable of the conceit of thy pain and horror, yet we know there can be no danger in the forsaking, while thou canst say, *My God*; he is thy God, as he cannot be ours; all our right is by adoption, his by nature; thou art one with him, in eternal essence, we come in by grace and merciful election, yet, whilst thou shalt enable me to say, *My God*, I shall hope never to sink under thy desertions.

But, whilst I am transported with the sense of thy sufferings, O Saviour, let me not forget to admire those sweet mercies of thine, which thou pourest out upon thy persecutors: They rejoice in thy death, and triumph in thy misery, and scoff at thee in both; instead of calling down fire from heaven upon them, thou heapest coals of fire upon their heads; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*; they blaspheme thee, thou prayest for them; they scorn, thou pitiest; they sin against thee, thou prayest for their forgiveness: they profess their malice, thou pleadest their ignorance. O compassion without end, ample, without measure; fit for the Son of God, the Saviour of men: Wicked and foolish *Yves*, ye would be miserable, he will not let you: ye would fain draw upon yourselves, the guilt of his blood, he deprecates it; ye kill, he sues for your remission and life; his tongue cries louder than his blood, *Father forgive them*: O Saviour, thou couldst not but be heard; those who out of ignorance and simplicity thus

thus persecuted thee, find the happy issue of thine intercession; now I see whence it was that three thousand souls were converted, soon after at one sermon; it was not *Peter's* speech, it was thy prayer, that was thus effectual: Now they have grace to know and confess whence they have both forgiveness, and salvation, and can recompence their blasphemies with thanksgiving. What sin is there, Lord, whereof I can despair of the remission? or what offence can I be unwilling to remit, when thou prayest for the forgiveness of thy murderers, and blasphemers?

There is no day so long but hath his evening; at last, O blessed Saviour, thou art drawing to an end of these painful sufferings, when spent with toil and torment, thou criest out, *I thirst*; how shouldst thou do other, O dear Jesu; how shouldst thou do other than thirst? The night thou hadst spent in watching, in prayer, in agony, in thy conveyance from the garden to *Jerusalem*; from *Annas* to *Caiaphas*, from *Caiaphas* to *Pilate* in thy restless answers, in buffetings, and stripes; the day, in arraignments, in haling from place to place, in scourgings, in stripping, in robing, and disrobing, in bleeding, in toiling under thy cross, in woundings, and discension, in pain, and passion; no marvel if thou thirstedst. Although there was more in this drought than thy need; it was no less requisite thou shouldst thirst, than that thou shouldst dye; both, were upon the same predetermination, both upon the same prediction: How else should that word be verified, *Psf. xxii. 14, 15. All my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels; My strength is dried up like a posyerd and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death?* Had it not been to make up that word, whereof one jot cannot pass, though thou hadst felt this thirst, yet thou hadst not bewrayed it: Alas, what could it avail to bemoan thy wants to insulting enemies,

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whose sport was thy misery? How should they pity thy thirst, that pitied not thy bloodshed? It was not their favour that thou expectedst herein but their conviction; O Saviour, how can we, thy sinful servants, think much to be exercised with hunger and thirst, when we hear thee thus plain.

Thou, that not long since, proclaimedst in the Temple, *If any man thirst, Let him come to me and drink; He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters*, now thyself thirstest; thou, in whom we believe, complainedst to want some drops; thou hadst the command of all the waters both above the firmament, and below it; yet thou wouldst thirst; even so, Lord, thou that wouldst dye for us, wouldst thirst for us: O give me to thirst after those waters which thou promisedst, what ever become of those waters which thou wouldst want; the time was when craving water of the Samaritan, thou gavest better than that thou askedst: O give me to thirst after that more precious water; and so do thou give me of that water of life, that I may never thirst again.

Blessed God, how marvelously dost thou contrive thine own affairs! thine enemies, while they would despight thee, shall unwittingly justify thee, and convince themselves; as thou foresaidst, *In thy thirst, they gave thee vinegar to drink*; had they given thee wine, thou hadst not taken it; the night before thou hadst taken leave of that comfortable liquor, resolving to drink no more of that sweet juice till thou shouldst drink it new with them, in thy Father's kingdom; had they given thee water they had not fulfilled that prediction, whereby they were self condemned: I know not, now, O dear Jesu, whether this last draught of thine were more pleasing to thee, or more distasteful; distasteful in itself (for what liquor could be equally harsh :) pleasing, in that it made up those sufferings thou wert to endure, and those prophecies thou wert to fulfil.

Now

Now there is no more to do, thy full consummation of all predictions, of all types and ceremonies, of all sufferings, of all satisfactions is happily both effected and proclaimed; nothing now remains but a voluntary, sweet, and heavenly resignation of thy blessed soul into the hands of thine eternal father, and a bowing of thine head, for the change of a better crown, and a peaceable obdormition in thy bed of ease and honour, and an instant entrance into rest, triumph, and glory.

And now, O blessed Jesu, how easily have carnal eyes, all this while, mistaken the passages and intentions of this thy last and most glorious work? Our weakness could hitherto see nothing here but pain and ignominy; now, my better-inlightened eyes see in this elevation of thine, both honour and happiness: lo, thou, that art the mediator betwixt God and man, the reconciler of heaven and earth, art lift up betwixt earth and heaven, that thou mightst accord both; thou that art the great captain of our salvation, the conqueror of all the adverse powers of death and hell, art exalted upon this triumphal chariot of the cross, that thou mightst trample upon death, and drag all those infernal principalities, untraced after thee: those arms which thine enemies meant violently to extend, are stretched forth for the embracing of all mankind, that shall come in for the benefit of thine all-sufficient redemption: even whilst thou sufferest, thou reignest. Oh the impotent madness of silly men, they think to disgrace thee with wry faces, with tongues put out, with bitter scoffs, with poor wretched indignities, when, in the mean time, *the heavens declare thy righteousness, O Lord, and the earth shows forth thy power*: The sun withholds his light, as not abiding to see the sufferings of his creator; the earth trembles under the sense of the wrong done to her maker; the rocks rend, the veil of the Temple tears from the top to the bottom; shortly, all the frame of the world



world acknowledges the dominion of that Son of God whom man despised.

Earth and hell have done their worst ; O Saviour, thou art in thy paradise, and triumphant over the malice of men and devils : the remainders of thy sacred person are not yet free ; the soldiers have parted thy garments, and cast lots upon thy seamless coat (these poor spoils cannot so much enrich them, as glorify thee ; whose scriptures are fulfilled by their barbarous fortitions.) The Jews sue to have thy bones divided, but they sue in vain ; no more could thy garments be whole, than thy body could be broken ; one inviolable decree over-rules both ; foolish executioners, ye look up at that crucified body, as if it were altogether in your power and mercy ; nothing appears to you but impotence and death, little do ye know what an irresistible guard there is upon that sacred corpse ; such, as if all the powers of darkness shall band against, they shall find themselves confounded ; in spite of all the gates of hell that word shall stand, *Not a bone of him shall be broken.*

Still, the infallible decree of the Almighty leads you on to his own ends, through your own ways ; ye saw him already dead, whom ye came to dispatch ; those bones, therefore, shall be whole, which ye had no power to break ; but yet, that no piece, either of your cruelty, or of divine prediction, may remain unsatisfied ; he, whose bones may not be impaired, shall be wounded in his flesh ; he whose flesh was yielded up, must yield his last blood ; *One of the soldiers, with a spear pierced his side ; and forthwith there came out blood and water :* Malice is wont to end with life, here it over-lives it ; cruel man, what means this so late wound ? What commission hadst thou for this bloody act ? Pilate had given leave to break the bones of the living, he gave no leave to gort the side of the dead ; what wicked supererogation is this ? What a superfluity of maliciousness ?

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To what purpose did thy spear pierce so many hearts in that one? why wouldst thou kill a dead man? Methinks the blessed Virgin, and those other passionate associates of hers, and the disciple whom *Jesus* loved, together with the other of his fellows, the friends and followers of Christ; and especially he that was so ready to draw his sword upon the troop of his Master's apprehenders, should have work enough to contain themselves within the bounds of patience, at so savage a stroke: their sorrow could not chuse but turn to indignation; and their hearts could not but rise (as even mine doth now) at so impertinent a villany: how easily could I rave at that rude hand? but, O God, when I look up to thee, and consider how thy holy and wise providence so over-rules the most barbarous actions of men, that (besides their will) they turn beneficial, I can at once hate them and bless thee; this very wound hath a mouth to speak the Messiahship of my Saviour, and the truth of thy scripture; *They shall look at him whom they have pierced.* Behold now the second *Adam* sleeping, and out of his side formed the Mother of the living, the evangelical church; behold the rock which was smitten, and the waters of life gushed forth; behold the fountain that is set open to the house of *David*, for sin, and for uncleanness; a fountain not of water only, but of blood too; O Saviour, by thy water we are washed, by thy blood we are redeemed: those two sacraments which thou didst institute alive, flow also from thee, dead, as the last memorials of thy love to thy church; the water of baptism, which is the laver of regeneration; the blood of the new Testament shed for remission of sins; and these, together, with the spirit that gives life to them both, are the three witnesses on earth, whose attestation cannot fail us. Oh precious, and sovereign wound, by which our souls are healed; into this cleft of the rock  
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let my dove fly, and enter ; and there safely hide herself from the talons of all the birds of prey.

It could not be, but that the death of Christ contrived, and acted at *Jerusalem* in so solemn a festival, must needs draw a world of beholders ; the *Romans*, the Centurion and his band, were there as actors, as supervisors of the execution ; those strangers were no otherwise ingaged, than as they that would hold fair correspondence with the citizens, where they were engarrisoned ; their freedom from prejudice rendered them more capable of an ingenuous construction of all events ; *Now, when the Centurion and they that were with him that watched Jesus, saw the earthquake, and the things that were done, they feared greatly, and glorified God, and said, Truly this was the Son of God.*

What a marvellous concurrence is here of strong and irrefragable convictions ? Meekness in suffering ; prayer for his murderers ; a faithful resignation of his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father ; the sun eclipsed, the heaven darkned, the earth trembling, the graves open, the rocks rent, the veil of the temple torn ; who could go less, than this ? truly this was the son of God. He suffers patiently ; this is through the power of grace, many good men have done so, through his enabling ; the frame of Nature suffers with him, this is proper to the God of nature, the Son of God.

I wonder not that these men confessed thus ; I wonder that any spectator confessed it not ; these proofs were enough to fetch all the world upon their knees, and to have made all mankind a convert ; but, all hearts are not alike ; no means can work upon the wilfully obdured ; even, after this the soldier pierced that blessed side ; and whilst Pagans relented, Jews continued impenitent ; yet, even of that nation, those beholders, whom envy and partiality had not interested in this slaughter, were stricken with just astonishment, and smote their breasts, and shook their heads ; and  
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by passionate gesture, spake what their tongues durst not ; how many must there needs be in this universal concourse, of them whom he had healed of diseases, or freed from devils, or miraculously fed, or some way obliged in their persons, or friends ? these, as they were deeply affected with the mortal indignities which were offered to their acknowledged *Messiah*, so they could not but be ravished with wonder, at those powerful demonstrations of the deity of him, in whom they believed ; and strangely distracted in their thoughts, whilst they compared those sufferings with that omnipotence : as yet their faith and knowledge was but in the bud, or in the blade ; how could they choose but think, were he not the Son of God, how could these things be ? and if he were the Son of God, how could he die ? His resurrection, his ascension, should soon after perfect their belief ; but in the mean time their hearts could not but be conflicted with thoughts hard to be reconciled ; howsoever, they glorify God, and stand amazed at the expectation of the issue.

But above all other, O thou blessed virgin, the holy mother of our Lord ; how many swords pierced thy soul, whilst standing close by his cross thou sawest thy dear Son, and Saviour thus indignely used, thus stripped, thus stretched, thus nailed, thus bleeding, thus dying, thus pierced ? how did thy troubled heart now recount what the Angel *Gabriel* had reported to thee from God in the message of thy blessed conception of that Son of God ; how didst thou think of the miraculous formation of that thy divine burden by the power of the holy Ghost ? how didst thou recal those prophecies of *Isaiah* and *Simon* concerning him, and all these supernatural works of his, the intregable proofs of his godhead ; and laying all these together with the miserable infirmities of his passion, how wert thou crucified with him ? The care that he took for thee, in the extremity of his torments, could not choose but melt thy heart into sorrow ; But oh, when, in the  
height



height of his pain and misery, thou heardest him cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* what a cold horror possessed thy soul; I cannot now wonder at thy qualms and swoonings; I could rather wonder that thou survivedst so sad an hour. But when recollecting thyself, thou saw'st the heavens to bear a part with thee in thy mourning, and feltst the earth to tremble no less than thyself, and foundest that the dreadful concussion of the whole frame of nature proclaimed the deity of him that would thus suffer and dye; and rememberedst his frequent predictions of drinking this bitter cup, and of being baptized thus in blood; thou beganst to take heart, and to comfort thyself with the assured expectation of the glorious issue; more than once had he foretold thee his victorious resurrection; he who had openly professed *Jonas* for his type; and had fore-promised, in three days, to raise up the ruined temple of his body; who hadst so great a share in that sacred body of his. The just shall live by faith; lo, that faith of thine in his ensuing resurrection, and in his triumph over death, gives thee life, and cheers up thy drooping soul, and bids it, in an holy confidence, to triumph over all thy fears and sorrows; and him whom thou now seest dead and despised represents unto thee living, immortal, glorious.



**XLVII. *The Resurrection.***

**ST. MATT. XXVII. 62—66.**

**G**RACE doth not ever make show where it is; there is much secret riches both in the earth, and sea, which never eye saw; I never heard any news, till now, of *Joseph of Arimathea*; yet was he eminently both

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both rich and wise, and good ; a worthy, though close, disciple of our Saviour. True faith may be wisely reserved, but will not be cowardly ; Now he puts forth himself, and dares beg the body of Jesus : Death is wont to end all quarrels ; *Pilate's* heart tells him he hath done too much already, in sentencing an innocent to death ; no doubt that Centurion had related unto him the miraculous symptoms of that passion ; he that so unwillingly condemned innocence, could rather have wished that just man alive, than have denied him dead : the body is yielded, and taken down ; and now, that which hung naked upon the cross, is wrapped in fine linen ; that which was soiled with sweat and blood, is curiously washed, and embalmed ; Now, even *Nicodemus* comes in for a part ; and fears not the envy of a good profession ; death hath let that man loose, whom the law formerly over-awed with restraint ; he hates to be a night-bird any longer ; but boldly flies forth, and looks upon the face of the sun ; and will be now as liberal in his orders, as he was before niggardly in his confession ; O Saviour, the earth was thine, and the fulness of it ; yet, as thou hadst not an house of thine own, whilst thou livedst, so thou hadst not a grave when thou wert dead ; *Joseph* that rich counsellor lent thee his ; lent it so, as it should never be restored ; thou tookst it up but for a while ; but that little touch of that sacred corpse of thine made it too good for the owner.

O happy *Joseph*, that hadst the honour to be landlord of the Lord of life, how well is thy house-room repaid with a mansion not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ! Thy garden and thy tomb were hard by *Calvary*, where thou couldst not fail of many meditations of thy frailty ; how oft hadst thou seasoned that new tomb with sad and savory meditations ? and hadst oft said within thyself ; here I shall once lie down to my last rest, and wait for my resurrection ;

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little didst thou then think to have been disappointed by so blessed a guest ; or, that thy grave should be again so soon empty ; and in that emptiness incapable of any mortal indweller : how gladly dost thou now resign thy grave to him, in whom thou livest ; and, who liveth for ever ; whose soul is in paradise, whose Godhead every where : hadst thou not been rich before, this gift had enriched thee alone ; and more enabled thee, than all thine earthly honour ; now, great, princes envy thy bounty ; and have thought themselves happy to kiss the stones of that rock, which thou thus hewedst, thus bestowedst.

Thus purely wrapped, and sweetly embalmed lies the precious body of our Saviour, in *Joseph's* new vault ; are ye now also at rest, O ye *Jewish* rulers, is your malice dead, and buried with him ? hath *Pilate* enough served your envy, and revenge ? Surely it is but a common hostility that can die ; yours surviveth death, and puts you upon a further project : *The chief priests, and pharisees came together unto Pilate ; saying, Sir, we remember that this deceiver said, whilst he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again ; command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure till the third day ; lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say to the people he is risen.*

How full of terrors and inevitable perplexities is guiltiness ? These men were not more troubled with envy at Christ alive, than now with fear of his resurrection ; and what can now secure them ? *Pilate* had help'd to kill him ; but who shall keep him from rising ? Wicked and foolish *Jews*, how fain would ye fight against God, and your own hearts ? How gladly would ye deceive yourselves, in believing him to be a deceiver, whom your consciences knew to be no less true than powerful ? *Lazarus* was still in your eye ; that man was no phantasm ; his death, his reviving was undeniable ; the so fresh resuscitation of  
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that dead body after four days dissolution, was a manifest conviction of omnipotence : how do ye vainly wish that he could deceive you in the fore-reporting of his own resurrection ? Without a divine power he could have raised neither *Lazarus*, nor himself : with, and by it, he could as well raise himself as *Lazarus* : what need we other witnesses than your own mouths ? That which he would do, ye confess he foretold ; that the truth of his word might answer the power of this deed, and both of them might argue him the God of truth, and power, and yourselves enemies to both ; and now what must be done ? The sepulcher must be secured ? and you with it ; an huge stone, a strong guard must do the deed : and that stone must be sealed, that guard of your own designing : methinks I hear the soldiers and busy officers when they were rolling that other weighty stone (for such we probably conceive) to the mouth of the vault with much toil and sweat, and breathlessness, how they bragged of the sureness of the place, and unremoveableness of that load ; and when that so choice a watch was set, how they boasted of their valour and vigilance ; and said, they would make him safe from either rising, or stealing ; O the madness of impotent men, that think by either wile, or force to frustrate the will and designs of the almighty ; how justly doth that wise and powerful arbiter of the world laugh them to scorn in heaven, and beset them in their own vain devices ? O Saviour, how much evidence had thy resurrection wanted, if these enemies had not been thus maliciously provident ? How irrefragable is thy rising made by these bootless endeavours of their prevention.

All this while the devout *Marists* keep close, and silently spend their sabbath in a mixture of grief and hope : how did they wear out those sad hours, in bemoaning themselves each to other ? In mutual relations of the patient sufferings of the happy expiration



tion of their Saviour, of the wonderful events both in the heavens and earth, that accompanied his crucifixion; of his frequent, and clear predictions of his resurrection; and now, they have gladly agreed (so soon as the time will give them leave) in the dawning of the Sunday morning, to visit the dear sepulcher; neither will they go empty-handed: she that had bestowed that costly alabaster box of ointment, upon their Saviour alive, hath prepared no less precious odors for him dead.

Love is restless and fearless; in the dark of night these good women go to buy their spices, and ere the day-break, are gone out of their houses towards the tomb of Christ, to bestow them: this sex is commonly fearful; it was much for them to walk alone in that unsafe season, yet, as despising all fears and dangers, they thus spend the night after their sabbath: might they have been allowed to buy their perfumes on the sabbath, or to have visited that holy tomb sooner, can we think they would have staid so long? Can we suppose they would have cared more for the sabbath, than for the Lord of the sabbath, who now kept his sabbath in the grave? Sooner they might not come, later they would not, to present their last homage to their dead Saviour. Had these holy women known their *Jesus* to be alive, how had they hastened, who made such speed to do their last offices to his sacred corpse? For us, we know that our redeemer liveth; we know where he is: O Saviour, how cold and heartless is our love to thee, if we do not haste to find thee in thy word, and sacraments; if our souls do not fly up to thee, in all holy affections, into thy heaven?

Of all the women, *Mary Magdalen* is first named, and in some evangelists alone; she is noted above her fellows; none of them were so much obliged, none so zealously thankful: seven devils were cast out of her, by the command of Christ; that heart which

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was freed from Satan, by that powerful dispossession; was now possessed with a free, and gracious bounty to her deliverer. Twice at the least hath she poured out her fragrant and costly odors upon him : where there is a true sense of favour and beneficence, there cannot but be a fervent desire of retribution; O blessed Saviour, could we feel the danger of every sin, and the malignity of those spiritual possessions, from which thou hast freed us, how should we pour out ourselves into thankfulness unto thee:

Every thing here had horror; the place both solitary, and a sepulcher; nature abhors, as the visage, so the region of death and corruption: the time, night; only the moon gave them some faint glimmering, (for this being the seventeenth day of her age afforded some light to the latter part of the night) the business, the visitation of a dead corpse; their zealous love hath easily overcome all these; they had followed him in his sufferings, when the disciples left him; they attended him to his cross weeping; they followed him to his grave, and saw how *Joseph* laid him; even there they leave him not, but, ere it be day-light, return to pay him the last tribute of their duty. How much stronger is love than death? O blessed Jesu, why should not we imitate thy love to us? those whom thou lovest, thou lovest to the end, yea in it, yea after it; even when we are dead, not our souls only, but our very dust is dearly respected of thee; what condition of thine should remove our affections from thy person in heaven, from thy limbs on earth.

Well did these worthy women know what *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, and *Nicodemus* had done to thee: they saw how curiously they had wrapped thee, how precious they had embalmed thee; yet, as not thinking others beneficence could be any just excuse of theirs, they bring their own odors to thy sepulcher to be perfumed by the touch of thy sacred body; what thank is it to us that others are obsequious to thee,

thee, whilst we are slack or niggardly? We may rejoice in others forwardness; but if we rest in it, how small joy shall it be to us, to see them go to heaven without us.

When, on the *Friday* evening, they attended *Joseph* to the intombing of *Jesus*, they mark'd the place, they mark'd the passage, they mark'd that inner grave-stone, which the owner had fitted to the mouth of that tomb, which all their care is now to remove; *Who shall roll away the stone?* That other more weighty load, wherewith the vault was barred, the seal, the guard set upon both, came not perhaps, into their knowledge; this was the private plot of *Pilate* and the priests, beyond the reach of their thoughts.

I do not hear them say, how shall we recover the charges of our odours? Or, how shall we avoid the envy and censure of our angry elders, for honouring him whom the governors of our nation have thought worthy of condemnation? The only thought they now take, is, *Who shall roll away the stone?* Neither do they stay at home, and move this doubt; but, when they are well forward on their way, resolving to try the issue. Good hearts cannot be so solicitous for any thing under heaven, as for removing those impediments which lie between them and their Saviour. O blessed *Jesu*, thou who art clearly revealed in heaven, art yet still both hid, and sealed up from too many here on earth: neither is it some thin veil that is spread between thee and them, but an huge stone; even a true stone of offence lies rolled upon the mouth of their hearts; yea, if a second weight were super-added to thy grave here, no less than three spiritual bars are interposed betwixt them, and thee above; idleness, ignorance, unbelief; who shall roll away these stones, but the same power that removed thine? O Lord, remove our ignorance that we may know thee, our idleness that we may seek thee, our unbelief that we may find and enjoy thee.

How well it succeeds, when we go faithfully and conscionably about our work, and leave the issue to God ! Lo, now God hath removed the cares of these holy women, together with the grave stone ; to the wicked that falls out which they feared, to the godly that which they wished and cared for, yea more ; holy cares ever prove well, the worldly dry the bones and disappoint the hopes. Could these good visitants have known of a greater stone sealed, of a strong watch set, their doubts had been doubled ; now God goes beyond their thoughts and at once removes that which both they did, and might have feared ; the stone is removed, the seal broken, the watch fled. What a scorn doth the almighty God make of the impotent designs of men ? They thought the stone shall make the grave sure, the seal shall make the stone sure, the guard shall make both sure ; now when they think all safe, God sends an Angel from heaven above, the earth quakes beneath, the stone rolls away, the soldiers stand like carcasses, and, when they have got heart enough to run away, think themselves valiant ; the tomb is opened, Christ is risen, they confounded. O the vain projects of silly men ! As if with one shovel-ful of mire they would dam up the sea, or with a rag hanged forth, they would keep the Sun from shining ; O these spiders-webs, or houses of cards which fond children have (as they think) skillfully framed, which the least breath breaks and ruins ; who are we, sorry worms, that we should look in any business, to prevail against our creator ? What creature is so base that he cannot arm against us, to our confusion ? The lice and frogs shall be too strong for *Pharaoh*, the worms for *Herod* ; there is no wisdom nor council against the Lord.

O the marvellous pomp and magnificence of our Saviour's resurrection ; the earth quakes, the Angel appears, that it may be plainly seen that this divine person now rising, had the command both of earth and heaven :



heaven : at the dissolution of thine human nature, O Saviour, was an earthquake, at the reuniting of it, is an earthquake ; to tell the world, that the God of nature then suffered, and had now conquered ; whilst thou layest still in the earth, the earth was still ; when thou camest to fetch thine own, *The earth trembled at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob* ; when thou our true *Samson* awakedst, and foundest thyself tied with these Philistian cords, rousedst up and brakedst those hard and strong twists with a sudden power, no marvel if the room shook under thee.

Good cause had the earth to quake, when the God that made it, powerfully calls for his own flesh, from the usurpation of her bowels ; good cause had she to open her graves and yield up her dead, in attendance to the Lord of life, whom she had presumed to detain in that cell of her darkness ; what a seeming impotence was here, that thou who art the true rock of thy church, shouldst lye obscurely shrouded in *Joseph's* rock ? Thou that art the true corner stone of thy church, shouldst be shut up with a double stone, the one of thy grave, the other of thy vault ? Thou, by whom we are sealed to the day of our redemption, shouldst be sealed up in a blind cavern of earth ? But now, what a demonstration of power doth both the world and I see, in thy glorious resurrection ? The rocks rend, the graves open, the stones roll away, the dead rise and appear, the soldiers flee and tremble, Saints and Angels attend thy rising, O Saviour, thou liedst down in weakness, thou risest in power and glory ; thou liedst down like a man, thou risest like a God.

What a lively image hast thou herein given me of the dreadful majesty of the general resurrection, and thy second appearance ? Then not the earth only, but the powers of heaven shall be shaken ; not some few graves shall be open, and some Saints appear ; but all the bars of death shall be broken, and all that sleep

in their graves shall awake and stand up from the dead before thee; not some one Angel shall descend, but thou the great Angel of the covenant, attended with thousand thousands of those mighty spirits: and if these stout soldiers were so filled with terror at the feeling of an earthquake, and the sight of an Angel, that they had scarce breath left in them, for the time to witness them alive; where shall thine enemies appear, O Lord, in the day of thy terrible appearance, when the earth shall reel and vanish, and the elements shall be on a flame about their ears, and the heavens shall wrap up as a scroll?

O God, thou mightest have removed this stone, by the force of thine earthquake, as well as rend other rocks, yet thou wouldst rather use the ministry of an Angel; or, thou that gavest thyself life, and gavest being both to the stone and to the earth, couldst more easily have removed the stone than moved the earth; but it was thy pleasure to make use of an Angel's hand; and now he that would ask, why thou wouldst do it, rather by an Angel than by thyself, may as well ask, why thou didst not rather give thy law by thine own immediate hand, than by the ministration of Angels; why by an Angel thou smitest the *Israelites* with plagues, the *Affyrians* with the sword; why an Angel appeared to comfort thee after thy temptation and agony, when thou wert able to comfort thyself; why thou usest the influences of heaven to replenish the earth; why thou employest second causes in all events, when thou couldst do all things alone? It is good reason thou shouldst serve thyself of thine own, neither is there any ground to be required whether of their motion or rest besides thy will.

Thou didst raise thyself, the Angels removed the stone; they that could have no hand in thy resurrection, yet shall have an hand in removing outward impediments; not because thou needst, but because thou wouldst; like as thou alone didst raise *Lazarus*, thou badst others let him lose. Works of omnipo-

ency thou reserveſt to thine own immediate performance, ordinary actions thou doſt by ſubordinate means.

Although this act of the Angels was not meerly with reſpect to thee, but partly to thoſe devout women, to eaſe them of their care, to manifeſt unto them thy reſurrection : ſo officious are thoſe glorious ſpirits not only to thee their maker, but even to the meaneſt of thy ſervants, eſpecially in the furtherance of all their ſpiritual deſigns : let us bring our odours, they will be ſure to roll away the ſtone. Why do not we imitate them in our forwardneſs, to promote each others ſalvation ? We pray to do thy will here, as they do in heaven ; if we do not act our wiſhes, we do but mock thee in our devotions.

How glorious did this Angel of thine appear ? The terrified ſoldiers ſaw his face like lightning, both they and the women ſaw his garments ſhining, bright and white as ſnow : ſuch a preſence became his errand. It was fit that, as in thy paſſion the ſun was darkened, and all creatures were clad with heavineſs, ſo in thy reſurrection the beſt of thy creatures ſhould teſtify their joy and exultation in the brightneſs of their habit ; that as we, on feſtival days, put on our beſt cloaths, ſo thine Angels ſhould celebrate this bleſſed feſtivity with a meet representation of glory : they could not but enjoy our joy, to ſee the work of man's redemption thus fully finiſhed ; and, if there be mirth in heaven at the converſion of one ſinner, how much more when a world of ſinners is perfectly ransomed from death, and reſtored to ſalvation ? Certainly, if but one or two appeared, all rejoiced, all triumphed : neither could they but be herein ſenſible of their own happy advantage, who by thy mediation are confirmed in their glorious eſtate ; ſince thou by the blood of thy croſs, and power of thy reſurrection haſt reconciled things, not in earth only, but in heaven.

But, above all other, the love of thee their God and Saviour must needs heighten their joy, and make thy glory theirs; it is their perpetual work to praise thee; how much more now when such an occasion was offered, as never had been since the world began, never could be after: when thou the God of spirits hadst vanquished all the spiritual powers of darkness; when thou the Lord of life hadst conquered death, for thee and all thine; so as they may now boldly insult over their last enemy, *O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?*

Certainly, if heaven can be capable of an increase of joy and felicity, never had those blessed spirits so great a cause of triumph and gratulation, as in this day of thy glorious resurrection. How much more, O dear Jesu, should we men, whose flesh thou didst assume, unite, revive; for whose sake, and in whose stead, thou didst vouchsafe to suffer and die, whose arrearages thou payedst in death, and acquittedst in thy resurrection; whose souls are discharged, whose bodies shall be raised by the power of thy rising; how much more should we think we have cause to be overjoyed with the happy memory of this great work of thy divine power, and unconceivable mercy?

Lo, now how weak soever I am in myself, yet in the confidence of this victorious resurrection of my Saviour, I dare boldly challenge and defy you, O all ye adverse powers; do the worst ye can to my soul, in despite of you it shall be safe.

Is it sin that threatens me? Behold this resurrection of my redeemer publishes my discharge; my surety was arrested and cast into the prison of his grave, had not the utmost farthing of mine arrearages been paid, he could not have come forth: he is come forth, the sum is fully satisfied; what danger can there be of a discharged debt?

Is it the wrath of God? Wherefore is that but for sin? If my sin be defrayed, that quarrel is at an end:  
and



and if my Saviour suffered it for me, how can I fear to suffer it in myself? That infinite justice hates to be twice paid : he is risen, therefore he hath satisfied. *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen.*

Is it death itself? Lo, my Saviour that overcame death by dying, hath triumphed over him in his resurrection; how can I now fear a conquered enemy? What harm is there in the serpent, but for his sting? The sting of death is sin, that is pulled out by my powerful redeemer; it cannot now hurt me, it may refresh me to carry this cool snake in my bosom.

O then, my dear Saviour, I bless thee for thy death, but I bless thee more for thy resurrection; that was a work of wonderful humility, of infinite mercy; this was a work of infinite power: in that was human weakness; in this divine omnipotence: in that, thou didst die for our sins; in this, thou didst rise again for our justification.

And now, how am I conformable to thee, if when thou art risen, I lie still in the grave of my corruptions? How am I a limb of thy body, if, whilst thou hast that perfect dominion over death, death hath dominion over me? If whilst thou art alive and glorious, I lie rotting in the dust of death? I know the locomotive\* faculty is in the head; by the power of the resurrection of thee, our head, all we thy members cannot but be raised; as the earth cannot hold my body from thee in the day of the second resurrection, so cannot sin withhold my soul from thee, in the first; how am I thine, if I be not risen? And if I be risen with thee, why do I not seek the things above, where thou sittest at the right hand of God.

The vault or cave, which *Joseph* had hewn out of the rock, was large, capable of no less than ten persons; upon the mouth of it, eastward, was that great stone rolled: within it, at the right hand, in

\* The power of moving from place to place.

the north part of the cave, was hewn out a receptacle for the body, three handfuls high from the pavement ; and a stone was accordingly fitted for the cover of that grave.

Into this cave the good women (finding the stone rolled away) descended to seek the body of Christ ; and, in it, saw the Angels. This was the goal to which *Peter* and *John* ran, finding the spoils of death, the grave-cloaths wrapped up, and the napkin that was about the head, folded up together, and laid in a place by itself ; and as they came in haste, so they return'd with wonder.

I marvel not at your speed, O ye blessed disciples, if upon the report of the women, ye ran, yea flew upon the wings of zeal to see what was become of your master ; ye had wont to walk familiarly together, in the attendance of your Lord ; now society is forgotten ; and as for a wager, each tries the speed of his legs, and with neglect of other, vies who shall be first at the tomb.

Who would not but have tried masteries with you in this case, and have made light touches of the earth, to have held paces with you ? your desire was equal, but *John* is the younger, his limbs are more nimble, his breath more free ; he first looks into the sepulchre, but *Peter* goes down first : O happy competition who shall be more zealous in the enquiry after Christ ! Ye saw enough to amaze you, not enough to settle your faith. How well might you have thought, *Our Master is not subdued, but risen* ; had he been taken away by others hands, this fine linen had not been left behind ; had he not himself risen from this bed of earth, he had not thus wrapped up his night-cloaths, and laid them sorted by themselves ; what can we doubt when he foretold us he would rise ? O blessed Jesu, how wilt thou pardon our errors, how should we pardon and pity the errors of each other, in lesser occasions, when as yet thy prime and dearest  
disciples,

disciples, after so much divine instruction, *knew not the scriptures, that thou must rise again from the dead*; they went away more astonished than confident; more full of wonder as yet than of belief.

There is more strength of zeal (where it takes) in the weaker sex; those holy women, as they came first, so they staid last; especially devout *Mary Magdalen*, stands still at the mouth of the cave, weeping; well might those tears have been spared, if her knowledge had been answerable to her affection; her faith to her fervor; withal, (as our eye will be where we love) she stoops and looks down into that dear sepulchre.

Holy desires never but speed well; there she sees two glorious Angels, the one sitting at the head, the other at the feet where the body of *Jesus* had lain. Their shining brightness shew'd them to be no mortal creatures, besides that *Peter* and *John* had but newly come out of the sepulchre, and both found and left it empty, in her sight; which was now suddenly filled with those celestial guests; that white linen, wherewith *Joseph* had shrouded the sacred body of *Jesus*, was now shamed with a brighter whiteness.

Yet do I not find the good woman ought appalled with that unexpected glory; so was her heart taken up with the thought for her saviour, that she seemed not sensible of whatsoever other objects; those tears which she did let drop into the sepulchre, send up back to her the voice of those Angels, *Woman, why weepest thou?* God and his Angels take notice of every tear of our devotion; the sudden wonder hath not dried her eyes, nor charmed her tongue; she freely confesseth the cause of her grief to be the missing of her Saviour; *They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him*; alas, good *Mary*, how dost thou lose thy tears? Of whom dost thou complain, but of thy best friend? Who hath removed thy Lord but himself? Who but his own deity hath taken away that human body out of that region of death?

Neither is he now laid any more, he stands by thee whose removal thou complaineſt of. Thus many a tender and humbled ſoul afflicts itſelf, with the want of that Saviour, whom it hath and ſeeleth not.

Senſe may be no judge of the bewailed abſence of Chriſt; do but turn back thine eye, O thou religious ſoul; *And ſee Jeſus ſtanding by thee, though thou kneweſt not that it was Jeſus.* His habit was not his own; ſometimes it pleaſes our Saviour to appear unto his not like himſelf; his holy diſguiſes are our trials; ſometimes he will ſeem a ſtranger, ſometimes an enemy; ſometimes he offers himſelf to us in the ſhape of a poor man, ſometimes of a diſtreſſed captive; happy is he that can diſcern his Saviour in all forms; *Mary* took him for a gardener; devout *Magdalen*, thou art not much miſtaken; as it was the trade of the firſt *Adam* to dreſs the garden of *Eden*, ſo was it the trade of the ſecond, to tend the garden of his church. He digs up the ſoil by ſeaſonable afflictions, he ſows in it the ſeeds of grace; he plants it with gracious motions; he waters it with his word, yea, with his own blood; he weeds it by whoſome cenſures. O bleſſed Saviour, what is it that thou neglecteſt to do, for this ſelected incloſure of thy church? As in ſome reſpect, thou art the true vine, and thy father the huſbandman; ſo alſo in ſome other we are the vine, and thou art the huſbandman; O be thou ſuch to me as thou appearedſt unto *Magdalen*; break up the fallows of my nature, implant me with grace, prune me with meet correſtions, bedew me with the former and latter rain, do what thou wilt to make me fruitful.

Still the good woman weeps, and ſtill complains, and paſſionately inquires of thee, O Saviour, for thyſelf; how apt are we, if thou doſt never ſo little vary from our apprehenſions, to miſknow thee, and to wrong ourſelves by our miſopinions? All this while haſt thou concealed thyſelf from thine affectionate client; thou ſaweſt her tears and heardeſt her



importunities and inquiries ; at last, as it was with *Joseph* that he could no longer contain himself from the notice of his brethren, thy compassion causes thee to break forth into a clear expression of thyself, by expressing her name unto herself ; *Mary*, she was used, as to the name, so to the sound, to the accent ; thou spakest to her before, but in the tone of a stranger ; now, of a friend, of a master : like a good shepherd thou callest thy sheep by their name, and they know thy voice. What was thy call of her, but a clear pattern of our vocation ?

As her, so thou callest us ; first familiarly, effectually. She could not begin with thee, otherwise than in the compellation of a stranger ; it was thy mercy to begin with her, that correction of thy spirit is sweet and useful ; *Now after ye have known God, or rather are known of him* ; we do know thee, O God, but our active knowledge is after our passive ; first, we are known of thee, then we know thee that knewest us ; and as our knowledge, so is our calling, so is our election ; thou beginnest to us in all, and most justly sayest, *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you* : When thou wouldst speak to this devout client, as a stranger, thou spakest aloof ; *Woman, whom seekest thou ?* now, when thou wouldst be known to her, thou callest her by her name, *Mary*. General invitations, and common mercies are for us as men ; but where thou givest grace as to thine elect, thou comest close to the soul, and winnest us with dear and particular intimations.

That very name did as much as say, know him of whom thou art known and beloved ; and turns her about to thy view and acknowledgment ; *She turned herself, and saith unto him, R. bboni* ; which is to say, Master. Before her face was towards the Angels, this word fetches her about, and turns her face to thee, from whom her misprision had averted it ; we do not rightly apprehend thee, O Saviour, if any creature

creature in heaven or earth can keep our eyes, and our hearts from thee. The angels were bright and glorious, thy appearance was homely, thy habit mean; yet, when she heard thy voice, she turns her back upon the angels, and salutes thee with a *Rabboni*, and falls down before thee, in a desire of an humble embracing of those sacred feet, which she now rejoices to see past the use of her odours.

Where there was such familiarity in the mutual compellation, what means such strangeness in the charge? *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father*: Thou wert not wont, O Saviour, to make so dainty of being touched; it is not long since these very same hands touched thee, in thine anointing; the bloody-fluxed woman touched thee; the thankful penitent in *Simon's* house touched thee; what speak I of these? The multitude touched thee, the executioners touched thee; and, even after thy resurrection, thou didst not stick to say to thy disciples, *Touch me, and see*; and to invite *Thomas* to put his fingers into thy side: neither is it long after this, before thou sufferest the three *Maries* to touch and hold thy feet; how then sayest thou, *Touch me not*? Was it in a mild taxation of her mistaking? as if thou hadst said; thou knowest not that I have now an immortal body, but so demeanest thyself towards me, as if I were still in my wonted condition; know now, that the case is altered; howsoever indeed I have not yet ascended to my Father, yet this body of mine, which thou seest to be real and sensible, is now impassible, and qualified with immortality, and therefore worthy of a more awful veneration than heretofore. Or was it a gentle reproof of her dwelling too long in this dear hold of thee; and fixing her thoughts upon thy bodily presence; together with an implied direction of reserving the height of her affection for thy perfect glorification in heaven? Or lastly, was it a light touch of her too much haste and eagerness

ness in touching thee, as if she must use this speed in preventing thine ascension, or else be indangered to be disappointed of her hopes ; as if thou saidst ; be not so passionately forward, and sudden in laying hold of me, as if I were instantly ascending ; but know, that I shall stay some time with you upon earth, before my going up to my Father ? O Saviour, even our well-meant zeal in seeking and injoying thee may be faulty ; if we seek thee *where* we should not, on earth ; *how* we should not, unwarrantably ; there may be a kind of carnality in spiritual actions ; if we have heretofore known thee after the flesh, henceforth know we thee so no more ; that thou livedst here in this shape, that colour, this stature, that habit, I should be glad to know ; nothing that concerns thee can be unuseful. Could I say, here thou satest, here thou layest, here and thus thou wert crucified, here buried, here settest thy last foot ; I should with much contentment see and recount these memorials of thy presence ; but if I shall so fasten my thoughts upon these, as not to look higher to the spiritual part of thine achievements, to the power and issue of thy resurrection, I am never the better.

No sooner art thou risen than thou speakest of ascending, as thou didst lie down to rise, so didst thou rise to ascend, that is the consummation of thy glory and ours in thee. Thou that forbadeest her touch, enjoinedst her errand : *Go to my brethren, and say, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ; to my God, and your God.*

The annuntiation of thy resurrection and ascension is more than a private fruition ; this is for the comfort of one, that for the benefit of many : To sit still and enjoy is more sweet for the present ; but to go and tell is more gainful in the sequel. That great angel thought himself (as he well might) highly honoured, in that he was appointed to carry the happy news unto the blessed Virgin (thy holy Mother) of  
her

her conception of thee, her Saviour; how honourable must it needs be to *Mary Magdalen*, that she must be the messenger of thy second birth, thy resurrection, and instant ascension: how beautiful do the feet of those deserve to be, who bring the glad tidings of peace and salvation? what matter is it, O Lord, if men despise, where thou wilt honour?

To whom then dost thou send her? *Go, tell my brethren*; blessed *Jesu*, who are those? were they not thy followers? yea, were they not thy forsakers? yet, still thou stilest them thy brethren; O admirable humility! O infinite mercy! how dost thou raise their titles with thyself? At first they were thy servants; then disciples; a little before thy death, they were thy friends; now, after thy resurrection they were thy brethren; thou that wert exalted infinitely higher from mortal to immortal, descendest so much lower, to call them brethren, who were before friends, disciples, and servants. What, do we stand upon the terms of our poor inequality, when the Son of God stoops so low, as to call us brethren? But, oh mercy without measure! Why wilt thou, how canst thou, O Saviour, call them brethren, whom in their last parting thou foundest fugitives? Did they not run from thee? Did not one of them rather leave his inmost coat behind him, than not be quit of thee? Did not another of them deny thee, yea, abjure thee, and yet thou sayest, *Go tell my brethren*; it is not in the power of the sins of our infirmity, to unbrother us; when we look at the acts themselves, they are hainous; when at the persons, they are so much more faulty, as more obliged; but, when we look at the mercy of thee, who hast called us, now, *Who shall separate us?* When we have sinned, thy dearneſs hath reason to aggravate our sorrows; but when we have sorrowed, our faith hath no less reason to uphold us from despairing; even yet, we are brethren. Brethren, in thee, O Saviour, who  
art



art ascending for us ; in thee, who hast made thy father ours, thy God our God ; he is thy Father by eternal generation ; our Father by his gracious adoption ; thy God by unity of essence ; our God by his grace and election.

It is this propriety, wherein our life and happiness consisteth ; they are weak comforts that can be raised from the apprehension of thy general mercies ; what were I the better, O Saviour, that God were thy Father, if he be not mine ? Oh ! do thou give me a particular sense of my interest in thee, and thy goodness to me ; bring thou thyself home to me, and let me find that I have a God, and Saviour of my own.

It is fit I should mark thy order ; first, my Father, then yours ; even so, Lord, he is first thine, and in thine only right ours ; it is in thee that we are adopted ; it is in thee that we are elected ; without thee, God is not only a stranger, but an enemy to us ; thou only canst make us free ; thou only canst make us sons ; let me be found in thee, and I cannot fail of a Father in heaven.

With what joy did *Mary* receive this errand ; with what joy did the disciples welcome it from her ? Here was good news from a far country ; even as far as the utmost regions of death.

Those disciples, whose flight scattered them in their Master's apprehension are now, at night, like a dispersed covey met together, by their mutual call : their assembly is secret ; when the light was shut in, when the doors were shut up : still were they fearful, still were the *Jews* malicious ; the assured tidings of their Master's resurrection and life, hath filled their hearts with joy and wonder ; whilst their thoughts and speech are taken up with so happy a subject ; his miraculous and sudden presence bids their senses be witnesses of his reviving, and their happiness. *When the doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled,*  
for

*for fear of the Jews; came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said, peace be unto you.* O Saviour, how thou camest in thither, I wonder, I inquire not; I know not what a glorified body can do, I know there is nothing that thou canst not do: had not thine entrance been recorded for strange and supernatural; why was thy standing in the midst noted before thy passage into the room; why were the doors said to be shut whilst thou camest in? why were thy disciples amazed to see thee, ere they heard thee; Doubtless, they that once before took thee for a spirit, when thou didst walk upon the waters, could not but be astonished to see thee, whilst the doors were barred, (without any noise of thine entrance) to stand in the midst; well might they think thou couldst not thus be there, if thou wert not the God of spirits. There might seem more scruple of thy reality than of thy power; and, therefore, after thy wonted greeting, thou shonest them thy hands, and thy late sufferings, stamped with the impressions of thy feet; thy respiration shall argue the truth of thy life; thou breathest on them as a man; thou givest them thy spirit as a God; and as God and man, thou sendest them on the great errand of thy gospel.

All the mists of their doubts are now dispelled; the sun breaks out clear, they were glad when they had seen the Lord; had they known thee for no other than a meer man, this re-appearance could not but have affrighted them: since, till now, by thine Almighty power this was never done, that the long-since dead rose out of their graves, and appeared unto many; but when they recounted the miraculous works that thou hadst done, and thought of *Lazarus* so lately raised; thine approved deity gave them confidence, and thy presence joy.

We cannot but be losers by our absence from holy assemblies: where wert thou, O *Thomas*, when the rest of that sacred family were met together? Had thy

thy fear put thee to so long a flight, that, as yet, thou wert not returned to thy fellows? or, didst thou suffer other occasions to detain thee from this happiness? Now, for the time, thou missedst that divine breath, which so comfortably inspired the rest; now thou art suffered to fall into that weak distrust which thy presence had prevented; they told thee, *We have seen the Lord*; was not this enough? would no eyes serve thee but thy own? were thy ears to no use for thy faith? *Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* Suspicious man, who is the worse for that? whose is the loss if thou believe not? is there no certainty but in thine own senses? why, were not so many, and so holy eyes and tongues, as credible as thine own hands and eyes? How little wert thou yet acquainted with the ways of faith? Faith comes by hearing; these are the tongues that must win the whole world to an assent; and dost thou, the first man refuse to yield? why was that word so hard to pass? Had not that thy divine Master foretold thee, with the rest, that he must be crucified, and the third day rise again? Is any thing related to be done, but that which was fore-promised? any thing beyond the sphere of divine omnipotence? Go then, and please thyself in thine over-wise incredulity, whilst thy fellows are happy in believing,

It is a whole week, that *Thomas* rests in this sullen unbelief; in all which time, doubtless his ears were beaten with the many constant assertions of the holy women (the first witnesses of the resurrection) as also of the two disciples, walking to *Emmaus*, (whose hearts burning within them, had set their tongues on fire, in a zealous relation of those happy occurrences) with the assured reports of the rising, and re-appearance of many saints, in attendance of the Lord and giver of life; yet still he struggles with his own distrust;

and

and stiffly suspends his belief, to that truth, whereof he cannot deny himself enough convinced; as all bodies are not equally apt to be wrought upon by the same medicine, so are not all souls by the same means of faith; one is refractory, whilst others are pliable; O Saviour, how justly mightest thou have left this man to his own pertinacy; whom could he have thanked if he had perished in his unbelief? but, O thou good shepherd of *Israel*, that couldst be content to leave the ninety and nine to go fetch one stray in the wilderness; how careful wert thou to reduce this straggler to his fellows; right so were thy disciples reassembled, such was the season, the place the same, so were the doors shut up, when, (that unbelieving disciple being now present with the rest) thou so camest in, so stoodst in the midst, so showedst thy hands and feet; and singling out thy incredulous client, invitest his eyes to see, and his fingers to handle thine hands; and his hand to be thrust into thy side, that he might not be faithless, but faithful.

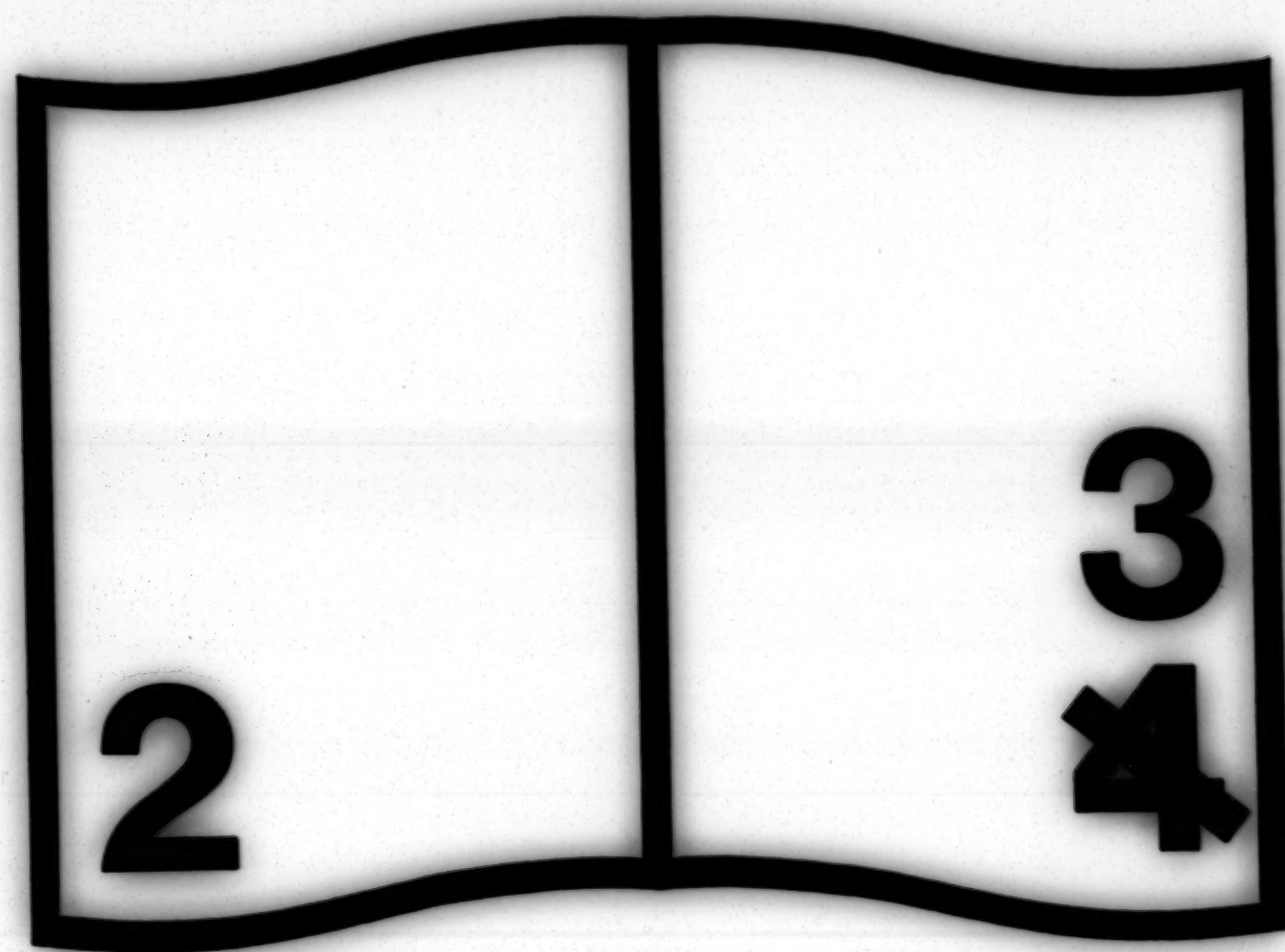
Blessed *Jesus*, how thou pitiest the errors and infirmities of thy servants; even when we are froward in our misconceits, and worthy of nothing but desertion, how thou followest us, and overtakest us with mercy; and, in thine abundant compassion, wilt reclaim and save us, when either we meant not, or would not. By how much more unworthy those eyes and hands were to see, and touch that immortal and glorious body, by so much more wonderful was thy goodness in condescending to satisfy that curious infidelity; neither do I hear thee so much as to chide that weak obstinacy; it was not long since thou didst sharply take up the two disciples that walked to *Emmaus*; O souls and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; but this was under the disguise of an unknown traveller, upon the way, when they were alone: Now, thou speakest with thine own tongue



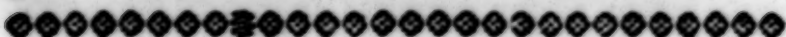
tongue before all thy disciples; instead of rebuking, thou only exhortest; *Be not faithless but faithful.*

Behold, thy mercy no less than thy power hath melted the congealed heart of thy unbelieving follower; *Then Thomas answered, and said unto him, my Lord, and my God.* I do not hear, that when it came to the issue, *Thomas* employed his hands in this trial; his eyes were now sufficient assurance; the sense of his Master's omniscience in this particular challenge of him, spared (perhaps) the labour of a further disquisition; and now, how happily was that doubt bestowed, which brought forth so faithful a confession; *My Lord, my God.*

I hear not such a word from those that believed. It was well for us, it was well for thee, O *Thomas*, that thou distrustedst; else, neither had the world received so perfect an evidence of that resurrection, whereon all our salvation dependeth; neither hadst thou yielded so pregnant and divine an assent to thy blessed Saviour; now, thou dost not only profess his resurrection, but his godhead too; and thy happy interest in both; and now, if they be blessed that have not seen and yet believed; blessed art thou also that having seen, hast thus believed; and blessed be thou, O God, who knowest how to make advantage of the infirmities of thy chosen, for the promoting of their salvation, the confirmation of thy church, the glory of thine own name. *Amen.*



**INCORRECT  
NUMBERING**

XLVII. *The ASCENSION.*

ACTS i. 4—12. &amp;c.

**I**T flood not with thy purpose, O Saviour, to ascend immediately from thy grave into heaven ; thou meant'st to take the earth in thy way ; not for a sudden passage, but for a leisurely conversation : upon thine *Easter-day* thou speakest of thine Ascension ; but thou wouldst have forty days interposed ; hadst thou merely respected thine own glory, thou hadst instantly changed thy grave for thy paradise ; for so much the sooner hadst thou been possessed of thy Father's joy ; we would not continue in a dungeon, when we might be in a palace ; but thou who for our sakes vouchsafedst to descend from heaven to earth, wouldst now, in the upshot, have a gracious regard to us, in thy return.

Thy death had troubled the hearts of many disciples, who thought that condition too mean to be compatible with the glory of the Messiah ; and thoughts of diffidence were apt to seize upon the holiest breasts ; so long therefore wouldst thou hold footing upon earth, till the world were fully convinced of the infallible evidences of thy resurrection ; of all which time, thou only canst give an account ; it was not for flesh and blood to trace the ways of immortality ; neither was our frail corruptible, sinful nature a meet companion for thy now-glorified humanity ; the glorious angels of heaven were now thy fittest attendants ; but yet, how oft did it please thee graciously to impart thyself this while unto men ; and not only to appear unto thy disciples, but to renew unto them the familiar forms of thy wonted conversation, in conferring, walking, eating with them ; and now, when thou drewest near to thy last parting, thou, who hadst many times shew'd thyself before to thy  
several



several disciples, thoughtest meet to assemble them all together, for an universal valediction.

Who can be too rigorous in censuring the ignorances of well-meaning Christians, when he sees the domestic followers of Christ, even after his resurrection, mistake the main end of his coming in the flesh? *Lord, wilt thou at this time, restore again the kingdom to Israel?* They saw their Master, now out of the reach of all Jewish envy, they saw his power unlimited, and irresistible; they saw him stay so long upon earth, that they might imagine he meant to fix his abode there; and what should he do there but reign? and wherefore should they be now assembled, but for the choice and distribution of offices, and for the ordering of the affairs of that state, which was now to be vindicated? Oh weak thoughts of well-instructed disciples! What should an heavenly body do in an earthly throne? How should a spiritual life be employed in secular cares? How poor a business is the temporal kingdom of *Israel*, for the king of heaven? And even yet, O blessed Saviour, I do not hear thee sharply controul this erroneous conceit of thy mistaken followers; thy mild correction insists rather upon the time than the misconceived substance of that restoration; it was thy gracious purpose that thy spirit should, by degrees, rectify their judgments, and illuminate them with thy divine truths; in the mean time, it was sufficient to raise up their hearts to an expectation of that Holy Ghost, which should shortly lead them into all needful and requisite verities; and now, with a gracious promise of that spirit of thine; with a careful charge renewed unto thy disciples, for the promulgation of thy gospel; with an heavenly benediction of all thine acclaiming attendants, thou takest leave of earth; *When he had spoken these things, whilst they beheld, he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

Oh



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Oh happy parting, fit for the Saviour of mankind, answerable to that divine conversation, to that succeeding glory ! O blessed Jesu, let me so far imitate thee, as to depart hence with a blessing in my mouth ; let my soul when it is stepping over the threshold of heaven, leave behind it a legacy of peace, and happiness.

It was from the mount of *Olivet*, that thou tookst thy rise into heaven ; thou mightst have ascended from the valley ; all the globe of earth was alike to thee ; but since thou wert to mount upward, thou wouldst take so much advantage, as that state of ground would afford thee ; thou wouldst not use the help of a miracle, in that, wherein nature offered her ordinary service : what difficulty had it been for thee to have ascended up from the very center of earth ? but since thou hadst made hills so much nearer unto heaven, thou wouldst not neglect the benefit of thine own creation ; where we have common helps, we may not depend upon supernatural provisions ; we may not strain the divine providence, to the supply of our negligence, or the humouring of our presumption ; thou that couldst always have walked on the sea, wouldst walk so but once, when thou wantedst shipping ; thou, to whom the highest mountains were but vallies, wouldst walk up to an hill to ascend thence into heaven ; O God, teach me to bless thee for means when I have them ; and to trust thee for means when I have them not ; yea, to trust to thee without means, when I have no hope of them.

What hill was this thou chusedst, but the mount of *Olivet* ? Thy pulpit, shall I call it, or thine oratory ? The place from whence thou hadst wont to shower down thine heavenly doctrine upon the hearers ; the place, whence thou hadst wont to send up thy prayers unto thy heavenly Father ; the place that shared with the temple for both ; in the day time thou wert preaching in the temple ; in the night praying

praying in the mount of *Olivet*. On this very hill was the bloody sweat of thine agony ; now, is it the mount of thy triumph ; from this mount of *Olivet* did flow that oil of gladness, wherewith thy church is everlastingly refreshed ; that God that uses to punish us in the same kind wherein we have offended ; retributes also to us, in the same kind and circumstances, wherein we have been afflicted ; to us also, O Saviour, even to us thy unworthy members, dost thou seasonably vouchsafe to give a proportionable joy to our heaviness, laughter to our mourning, glory to contempt and shame : Our agonies shall be answered with exaltation.

Whither then, O blessed Jesu, whither didst thou ascend ? whither but home into thine heaven ? From the mountain wert thou taken up ; and what but heaven is above the hills ? Lo, these are those mountains of spices, which thy spouse the church, long since desired thee to climb : thou hast now climbed up that infinite steepness ; and hast left all sublimity below thee : already hadst thou approved thyself the lord and commander of earth, of sea, of hell ; the earth confessed thee her lord, when at thy voice she rendered thee thy *Lazarus* ; when she shook at thy passion, and gave up her dead saints ; the sea acknowledged thee, in that it became a pavement to thy feet, and (at thy command) to the feet of thy disciple ; in that it became thy treasury for thy tribute money ; hell found and acknowledged thee, in that thou conqueredst all the powers of darkness ; even him that had the power of death, the devil : it now only remained, that as the lord of the air, thou shouldst pass thro' all the regions of that yielding element ; and, as lord of heaven thou shouldst pass thro' all the glorious\* contignations thereof ; that so every knee might bow to thee both in heaven, in the earth, and under the earth.

Thou

\* A framing together the wood-work of a house. So here it signifies *Roofs*.

Thou hadst an everlasting right to that heaven that should be ; an undoubted possession of it, ever since it was ; yea, even whilst thou didst cry in the cradle, whilst thou didst hang upon the cross, whilst thou wert sealed up in thy grave ; but thine human nature had not taken actual possession of it till now ; like as it was in thy true type, *David*, he had right to the kingdom of *Israel* immediately upon his anointing ; but yet, many an hard brunt did he pass ere he had the full possession of it in his ascent to *Hebron* ; I see now, O blessed Jesu, I see where thou art ; even far above all heavens, at the right hand of thy Father's glory ; this is the far country into which the nobleman went to receive for himself a kingdom ; far off to us, to thee near, yea intrinsical ; O do thou raise up my heart thither to thee ; place thou my affections upon thee above, and teach me therefore to love heaven because thou art there.

Howthen, O blessed Saviour, how didst thou ascend ? *Whilst they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight* ; so wast thou taken up, as that the act was thine own, the power of the act none but thine. Thou that descendedst was the same that ascendedst ; as in thy descent there was no use of any power, or will but thine own, no more was there in thine ascent ; still and ever wert thou the master of thine own acts ; thou laidst down thy own life, no man took it from thee ; thou raisedst up thyself from death, no hand did, or could help thee ; thou carriedst up thine own glorified flesh, and placedst it in heaven : The angels did attend thee, they did not aid thee ; whence had they their strength, but from thee ? *Elias* ascended to heaven, but he was fetcht up in a chariot of fire ; that it might appear hence, that man had need of others helps ; who else, could not of himself so much as lift up himself to the airy heaven, much less to the empireal : but thou, our Redeemer, neededst no chariot, no carriage of  
angels

angels ; thou art the author of life and motion ; they move in and from thee ; as thou therefore didst move thyself upward, so, by the same divine power, thou wilt raise us up to the participation of thy glory : *These vile bodies shall be made like to thy glorious body, according to the working, whereby thou art able to subdue all things unto thyself.*

*Elias* had but one witness of his rapture into heaven : *St. Paul* had none ; no not himself ; for whether in the body or out of the body he knew not ; thou, O blessed *Jesu*, wouldst neither have all eyes witnesses of thine ascension, nor yet too few : as, after thy resurrection thou didst not set thyself upon the pinnacle of the temple, nor yet publicly show thyself within it ; as making thy presence too cheap ; but mad'st choice of those eyes, whom thou wouldst bless with the sight of thee ; thou wert seen indeed of five hundred at once, but they were brethren ; so in thine ascension, thou didst not carry all *Jerusalem* promiscuously forth with thee, to see thy glorious departure, but only that selected company of thy disciples, which had attended thee in thy life : those who immediately upon thine ascending, returned to *Jerusalem*, were an hundred and twenty persons ; a competent number of witnesses, to verify that thy miraculous and triumphant passage into thy glory. Lo, those only were thought worthy to behold thy majestic ascent, which had been partners with thee in thy humiliation ; still, thou wilt have it thus, with us, O Saviour, and we embrace the condition ; if we will converse with thee in thy lowly estate here upon earth, wading with thee through contempt and manifold afflictions, we shall be made happy with the sight and communion of thy glory above.

O my soul, be thou now (if ever) ravished with the contemplation of this comfortable, and blessed farewell of thy Saviour ; what a sight was this, how



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full of joyful assurance of spiritual consolation? Methinks I see it still with their eyes, how thou my glorious Saviour didst leisurely and insensibly rise up from thine *Olivet*; taking leave of thine acclaiming disciples, now left below thee, with gracious eyes, with heavenly benedictions; methinks, I see how they followed thee with eager and longing eyes, with arms lifted up, as if they had wished them winged to have soared up after thee; and if *Elijah* gave assurance to his servant *Elisha*, that if he should behold him in that rapture, his master's spirit should be doubled upon him; what an accession of the spirit of joy, and confidence must needs be to thy happy disciples in seeing thee thus gradually rising up to thy heaven; Oh, how unwillingly did their intentive eyes let go so blessed an object? How unwelcome was that cloud that interposed itself betwixt thee and them? and closing up itself, left only a glorious splendor behind it, as the bright track of thine ascension; of old, here below, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud; now afar off in the sky, the cloud intercepted this heavenly glory: if distance did not rather do it than that bright meteor: their eyes attended thee on thy way so far as their beams would reach; when they could go no further, the cloud received thee; lo yet, even that very screen, whereby thou wert taken off, from all earthly view, was no other than glorious; how much rather do all the beholders fix their sight upon that cloud, than upon the best piece of the firmament? never was the sun itself gazed on with so much intention: with what long looks, with what astonished acclamations, did these transported beholders follow thee their ascending Saviour? as if they would have look'd through that cloud, and that heaven that hid thee from them.

But oh, what tongue of the highest archangel of heaven, can express the welcome of thee the king of glory,

glory, into those blessed regions of immortality? Surely the empireal heaven never resounded with so much joy; God ascended with jubilation, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet. It is not for us weak and finite creatures to wish to conceive those incomprehensible spiritual, divine gratulations that the glorious Trinity gave to the victorious, and now-glorified human nature. Certainly, if when he brought his only begotten son into the world, he said, *Let all the angels worship him*; much more now that he ascends on high, and hath led captivity captive, hath he given him a name above all names, that at the name of JESUS all knees should bow: And if the holy angels did so carol at his birth, in the very entrance into that estate of humiliation and infirmity, with what triumph did they receive him now returning from the perfect atchievement of man's redemption? And if when his type had vanquished *Goliath*, and carried the head into *Jerusalem*, the damsels came forth to meet him with dances and timbrels; how shall we think those angelical spirits triumphed in meeting of the great conqueror of hell and death? how did they sing; *Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.*

Surely, as he shall come, so he went; and behold he shall come with thousand of his holy ones; thousand thousands ministred unto him, and ten thousand thousands stood before him; from all whom, methinks I hear that blessed applause: *worthy is the lamb that was killed, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory. and praise; Praise, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne; and to the Lamb for evermore.* And why dost not thou, O my soul, help to bear thy part with that happy choir of heaven? Why art not thou rap'd out of my bosom, with an extasy of joy, to see this human nature of ours exalted above all

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the powers of heaven, adored of angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim, and all those mighty and glorious spirits ; and sitting there crowned with infinite glory, and majesty ?

Altho', little would it avail thee that our nature is thus honoured, if the benefit of this Ascension did not reflect upon thee ; how many are miserable enough in themselves, notwithstanding the glory of their human nature in Christ ? none but those that are found in him, are the happier by him ; who but the members, are the better for the glory of the head ? O Saviour, how should our weakness have ever hoped to climb into heaven, if thou hadst not gone before, and made way for us ? It is for us that thou the forerunner, art entred in : now thy church hath her wish : *Draw me, and I shall run after thee* ; even so, O blessed Jesu, how ambitiously should we follow thee ; with the paces of love and faith ; and aspire towards thy glory ? thou that art the way hast made the way to thyself, and us ; *Thou didst humble thyself, and becamest obedient to the death, even to the death of the cross* ; therefore hath God also highly exalted thee ; and upon the same terms will not fail to advance us ; we see thy track before us, of humility and obedience ; oh teach me to follow thee in the roughest ways of obedience, in the bloody paths of death, that I may at last overtake thee in those high steps of immortality.

Among those millions of angels, that attended this triumphant Ascension of thine, O Saviour, some are appointed to this lower station, to comfort thine astonished disciples, in the certain assurance of thy no less glorious return ; *two men stood by them in white apparel*. They stood by them, they were not of them ; they seemed men, they were angels ; men for their familiarity. Two, for more certainty of testimony ; in white, for the joy of thine Ascension.

The

The angels formerly celebrated thy nativity with songs ; but we do not find they then appeared in white ; thou wert then to undergo much sorrow, many conflicts ; it was the vale of tears into which thou wert come down ; so soon as thou wert risen, the women saw an angel in the form of a young man cloathed in white ; and now, so soon as thou art ascended, two men cloathed in white stand by thy disciples : thy task was now done, thy victory atchieved, and nothing remained but a crown ; which was now set upon thy head ; justly therefore were those blessed angels suited with the robes of light and joy ; and why should our garments be of any other colour ? why should oil be wanting to our heads, when the eyes of our faith see thee thus ascended ? It is for us, O Saviour, that thou art gone to prepare a place in those celestial mansions ; it is for us that thou sittest at the right hand of Majesty ; it is a piece of thy divine prayer to thy Father, that those, whom he hath given thee, may be with thee ; to every bleeding soul, thou sayest still, as thou didst to *Peter* ; whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me hereafter ; in assured hope of this glory why do I not rejoyce, and beforehand walk in white with thine angels, that, at the last I may walk with thee in white.

Little would the presence of these angels have availed, if they had not been heard, as well as seen ; they stand not silent therefore, but, directing their speech to the amazed beholders, say, *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven ?* What a question was this ? Could any of those two hundred and forty eyes have power to turn themselves off, to any other object than that cloud, and that point of heaven, where they left their ascended Saviour ? Surely, every one of them were so fixed, that had not the speech of these angels called them off, there they



they had set up their rest, till the darkness of night had interposed. Pardon me, O ye blessed angels; had I been there with them, I should also have been unwilling to have mine eyes pull'd off from that dear prospect, and diverted unto you: Never could they have gazed so happily as now. If but some great man be advanced to honour over our heads, how apt we are to stand to gaze, and to eye him as some strange meteor; let the sun but shine a little upon these dials, how are they look'd at, by all passengers? yet, alas, what can earthly advancement make us other than we are, dust and ashes; which the higher it is blown, the more it is scattered? Oh, how worthy is the king of glory to command our eyes, now in the highest pitch of his heavenly exaltation? Lord, I can never look enough at the place where thou art, but what eye could be satisfied with seeing the way that thou wentest?

It was not the purpose of these angels to check the long looks of these faithful disciples, after their ascended master; it was only a change of eyes that they intended; of carnal for spiritual; of the eye of sense, for the eye of faith; *This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

Look not after him, O ye weak disciples, as so departed that ye shall see him no more; if he be gone, yet he is not lost; those heavens that received him, shall restore him; neither can those blessed mansions decrease his glory; ye have seen him ascend upon the chariot of a bright cloud; and in the clouds of heaven ye shall see him descend again to his last judgment? he is gone; can it trouble you to know you have an advocate in heaven? strive not now so much to exercise your bodily eyes in looking after him, as the eyes of your souls in looking for him.

Ye cannot, O ye blessed spirits, wish other than well to mankind : how happy a diversion of eyes and thoughts is this that you advise ? If it be our sorrow to part with our Saviour, yet, to part with him into heaven it is our comfort and felicity ; if his absence could be grievous, his return shall be happy and glorious.

Even so, Lord *Jesus*, come quickly : in the mean while, it is not heaven that can keep thee from me, it is not earth that can keep me from thee : raise thou up my soul to a life of faith with thee ; let me over enjoy thy conversation, whilst I expect thy return.

*F I N I S.*

